# WHISPERINGS IN THE WOOD.

FROM THE SWEDISH OF ZACH TOPELIUS BY ALBERT ALBERG

DO YOU LOVE ME? W. *Frontispiece.*

# WHISPERINGS IN THE WOOD.

## FINLAND IDYLS FOR CHILDREN.

FROM THE SWEDISH
OF
ZACH. TOPELIUS.

BY

ALBERT ALBERG,
AUTHOR OF "FABLED STORIES FROM THE ZOO,"
AND EDITOR OF "CHIT-CHAT BY PUCK," "ROSE-LEAVES," "WOODLAND NOTES" AND "SNOWDROPS."



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# PREFACE.

ENCOURAGED by the success which my translation of the three volumes, *Chit-Chat by Puck*, *Roseleaves*, and *Woodland Notes*, from the Swedish, have received at the hand of the Press and the Public, I now venture also to submit to the English youth a selection of Zac. Topelii idyls from the same language. They have already found their way into the French, German, Danish, Finnish, and Russian tongues, which fact alone should be guarantee that like their kindred of H. C. Andersen and R. Gustafsson, they are endowed with delicate and everlasting beauty.

ALBERT ALBERG.

London, *May 1881.*

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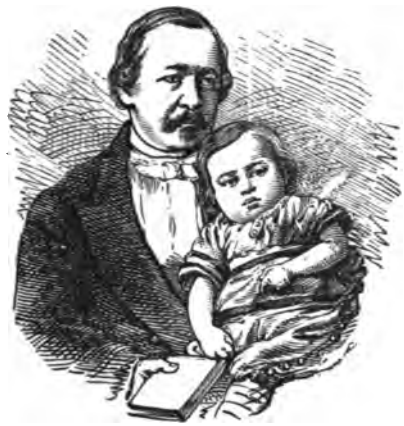
# A WORD TO MY LITTLE CHILDREN FRIENDS.



THERE once lived a little winged songster in the far-off woods of Finland. He chirruped in the pine and fir trees, amongst birches and mountain ashes. The blue-bells in the meadows, and the sedges along the strand, listened to the music of his song. The fleeting

clouds he thought but kindred spirits. The purple heather had cradled him, and the moanings of the winds and the sighings of the billows had been his lullaby.

An angel passed through the forest, and said to the little warbler: "Why don't you sing to little children?"

The wee birdie answered: "My voice is so feeble I cannot make myself heard amongst them."

"Sing from the very depths of your heart, and the children will listen to you."

"What shall I sing about?" the little warbler asked.

"Why, repeat to them the mystic whisperings of the woods. Warble to them the praises of God, tell of His greatness and everlasting love. Sing of the beauty of nature, and the wisdom of its Creator, and whisper to them how the Spirit of God pervades the whole world, and is the cause of life in everyone and everything. Tell of what is good upon earth; of piety, righteousness,

and virtue, of valour, humility, and charity. Sing joyously and fearlessly, sing of sunbeams that dispel the darkness of despair. But let your strains be ever pure and noble, that there always may linger a reflex from God's sunny realms upon the simplest of your lays and merriest of your ditties."

The songster bird replied: "Beloved angel, I fain would fulfil your request, but you know truly that I am only an insignificant little bird, with no particular endowments, and only one among a great flock of others in the woods. Who shall empower me for such a responsible task as to teach little children? Are we not told that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven'? and yet you tell *me*, whose pinions cannot bear me beyond the earth, and who may even be carried away by the storm, to dare to speak to little children, the chosen young people of God."

The angel replied: "Your own power will avail nothing, even if you were pure as snow, and had the trill of the nightingale that

erst sang in Paradise, and could even sing of the dawn that gilded the first day; your gifts were nought without the will of God, and your strains would become voiceless as the sands at the bottom of the sea. But pray from your inmost heart that you may be enabled to perform God's mind; then it will not be of yourself, but by the grace of Him who is all-powerful, even in the lowly, and who gives you a mission to carry out upon earth."

The humble warbler answered: "I will do your bidding." And listen, children, to his timid whisperings in the woods. They are brought to you from the sylvan haunts of Finland, as the seeds are wafted by the gentle breezes, and the winds of many lands carry them beyond the seas. Little children of Albion, will you listen to the whisperings from the woods of distant Finland?

My darling little friends, God's chosen children, whose like constitutes the populace of Heaven, whose clear blue little eyes are

permitted in your dreams to peep into the celestial regions, I will tell you that my little book does not contain much learning. It is like a little bird that flutters amongst flowers and grasses, dallying with fancies and thoughts. I fain would that I could have plucked a pen from the angel's pinions, but as I could not do that, I have taken one from my own breast, nearest my heart. I would that my little scroll might become the property of little children.

I would make it a gladsome and healthy little book, for God does not wish you to simper and whine through your lives, but that you should set bravely to work as good servants in His garden, and having won His favour we will ever enjoy a gladsome life in the sunshine of His grace.

Kind Eternal Father in Heaven, Thou whose voice speaks to us, not only in the strains of hymns and psalms, but even in the melodies of the birds, the murmurings of the brook, and in the merry sports of an

innocent child, may these leaves strewn before the winds carry germinating seeds into distant lands, and cause little children to love and praise Thy name.

Z. T.

*Helsingfors.*

# WHISPERINGS IN THE WOOD.

## THE WATER-LILY.

ERE you ever last summer at that pretty little island, where the graceful birches dally with the breeze, and where the water is so crystal clear that you can see the little fishes swimming over the white sandy bottom? If you have been there, you will be sure to remember the big boulder-stone on the strand, and the little water-lily bathing at its feet, and perhaps observed how every evening, when she grew sleepy, she folded her petals together and hid her chalice under her broad green leaves. Gossips said she was in love with the sun, for she was seen early every

morning to open her floral eyes and gaze with a pure innocent look at the dazzling orb of the heavens. But the snowy water-lily was not so presumptuous as to dream of becoming wedded to such a mighty and illustrious lord, placed so high, and, besides, who was so much older than she, that she did not even venture to call him her god-father. Oh dear no; the water-lily had no such wishes. She had become intimately acquainted with a young birch which grew on the strand, and mirrored his long flowing locks in the water, where the water-lily swam without ever abandoning her parent root.

The water-lily was not only beautiful, but also meek and good, which was far better; and in consequence she was everybody's favourite, and her suitors were innumerable. There was a whole company of sedges bulrushes quite near, and one of the sedge-fronds was continually bowing to her whenever there came the slightest breath of wind across the water. "Your most humble servant," said the sedge, as it made a reverence so deep that it almost dipped its tip

on the crystal floor. But the water-lily did not like a humility which only consisted in bowing, for she observed the sedges could look as stiff and haughty as anybody when the frolicsome little perches gambolled on the surface of the water.

There was also another suitor, still more stiff and erect than anyone else; it was a pole near the strand, to which an old fisherman used to tie his nets, that the waves might not carry them away. That pole was jealous of his position, and went out of the road for no man; no, not for fishes either, and had many a "set to" with those who came too near him.

The water-lily did not approve of that, for she was kind and forgiving, and never quarrelled with anybody, not even with the flat old boat, which at an abrupt turn sometimes would dip her in the water, when it had a chance.

The third suitor was the great big boulder-stone himself, who was called the landmark, for he constituted the boundary in the fishery that was divided between two hamlets.

The boulder-stone grew quite warm at heart on sunshiny days, when he stood staring at the water-lily, but he was so awfully old, some said sixty thousand years, and crisp moss grew in all his fissures, and made him look so hoary and wrinkled. The water-lily was perfectly awed by the reverence of the landmark, but to wed him would have been to carry admiration a great deal too far.

In one word, the water-lily loved a green young birch very much—that was always nodding to her so friendly when he mirrored himself in the glassy waters, and that he may have been said to have done a little too often; but it was only to behold his own image side by side with the lovely water-lily, his little sweetheart.

I had nearly forgotten to tell you the water-lily's pedigree. She was the youngest and most beloved child of the water-sprite, and he had cradled her in his arms when she was a wee thing, and now he frequently lifted her on his broad shoulders when she rose at dawn day from her soft and transparent

bed. And when night came, and the sun sank in the west, and the water-lily rested her white head beneath her leafy coverlet, then the weird old water-sprite would sing mystic songs to her, and she was gently cradled by the wave until her petals closed, and in the balmy summer night she dreamt bright dreams of all the beauty which the seas embrace.

"Don't come too near me, old Nixie!" said the pole to the water-sprite. But the sedge, which was always ready to cringe to those in power, twisted himself into every conceivable attitude, and kept on whispering: "Your humble servant, sir; your most obedient humble servant, sir!"

"Never mind those fools," said the boulder-stone to the water-sprite, for they were old acquaintances. "You had better give your child to me, and she will enjoy a life of luxury and ease," he continued.

"What things one must hear, to be sure," said the water-sprite, and laughed till the spray was thrown in showers from his beard. "What would everybody say if I were to

remove my darling floral daughter into your crib?"

"Well, what does it matter," replied the boulder-stone, "if I am some thousands of years old? I am a steady old fellow, and not carried away by the whirlwinds of life and passion, like the young dandies."

"Well, I think we had better leave the subject, 'tis only one of your whims; and let us remain firm friends as of old." But the boulder-stone, the pole, and the sedge-frond were each determined to obtain the water-lily for his wife.

The landmark one night roused the young dashing south-west wind, who had gone to sleep at the foot of the rock, and said to him: "Seeing that you have chosen my place for your lodging this night, you might do me a service in return."

"What is it?" asked the south-west wind.

"At sunrise to-morrow morning you must blow with all your might till you succeed in breaking off the young birch which grows on the strand, because it is for him, for-

sooth, that the water-lily won't become my wife."

"Very well," answered the reckless wind, "I have broken cedars and palm-trees as if they had been sticks; why shouldn't I break off a puny little birch stripling?"

The sedge again addressed himself to the billow, who slowly and sleepily, with the surf, surged in through the firth: "Your most humble servant, mighty swell of the ocean!" he greeted the wave, "Pray be so kind as to do me a little service as you pass by."

"What might that be?" the huge wave yawned.

"If you please, to surge on to the young birch on the strand and pull him down. He is the cause, forsooth, of the water-lily refusing to become my bride."

"Very well," answered the billow, "I have flooded forests and cities; it is a mere bagatelle for me to sweep away such a stripling of a birch. But I am falling asleep just now; we will wait till to-morrow morning."

"Your most humble servant," said the sedge-frond.

The pole was also annoyed with the birch, and managed to vex the fisherman when he was the same evening tying his nets to the pole. "You rascally pole!" the fisherman said, "you are tearing the net to pieces!"

"Well, it isn't my fault that I am so knotty," the pole replied. "On the strand grows a birch that would suit you far better; cut him down to-morrow and stick him into the bottom of the creek."

"Very well advised," said the fisherman; "I will think of it to-morrow."

The evening passed, and night came on, and the water-lily folded again the white petals of her chalice, and the birch looked quite joyous with delight as he beheld her in the soft twilight of the summer night. There were no forebodings of evil, and the water-lily enjoyed the sweet sleep of a child. A large yellow moth, whose nature it was to flit about at night, hovered anxiously about the birch, but the birch observed it

not. He was busy washing himself in the dew, which fell in little tiny trickling pearls in an almost invisible shower over him, and his thoughts were only how he should become quite spruce and elegant till his little water-lily again should look at him with her beaming floral eyes.

And it was not very long before a crimson streak was seen in the north-east, tinging the whole land, spreading and increasing every moment in intensity, until the vast expanse of the sky, east and north, was one terrific conflagration, where the clouds seemed like monster dragons vomiting fire.

The fisherman chanced to be awake, and looking out through the window of his hut, he said, rather surprised: "It betokens that we are going to have a regular gale to-day. I had better hasten out and take in the nets."

But as yet it was calm, and so perfectly still that not even the verdant ringlets of the young birch moved in the cool morning breeze. The water-lily began to open her chalice, and with a sleepy look, said "Good

morning" to her friend the birch. Never had the birch appeared so spruce before, she thought, and she had never appeared so charming before to him. They felt so happy and loving; and at this moment the sun rose in his full glory behind the crimson clouds and looked benignly down upon them in their youthful happiness in the early morning.

Then the boulder-stone impatiently shook his lodger the south-west wind, who moved in the soft grass. "Get up and work," said the landmark.

"Let me alone," answered the wind, and spread his great cloudy wings abreast, which he had used as a blanket. But the rock allowed him no peace. "Since you insist upon it, I will rage so that it shall whiz about you ears," the ærial depredator said, vexed; and barely awake, he tore roaring into the air, so that the tree-tops bowed dismayed.

He was quite wild that morning, the young madcap south-west wind. The sky soon became darkened with his gigantic wings, and

his wrath crested the billows of the sea. But the birch and the water-lily lived leeward of the isle, so they were not aware of the storm. They had charged a gilded little butterfly with messages of love from one another, and amused themselves in despatching and receiving these, and watching his ærial passage across the water that lay between them.

The storm increased, the trees creaked with the labour of trying to withstand it, the billows dashed the spray aloft, and it whizzed and roared around the cliffs and rocks as if a hundred thousand kittens were in battle with as many yelping whelps. The billows came rushing madly through the estuary, so that the little sedge-frond felt ill at ease, and writhed and twisted himself in an inconceivable manner to enable himself to hold his ground. "How stupid I was to ask the mighty billow to aid me," he thought; but it was too late now to repent. He already saw in the distance quite a watery mountain, showing the froth of his wrath. "There he is, the wave I bespoke!" he said, terrified; and on the instant the weird water-monster surged

over him and tore him from his root, and the last the sedge-frond said on being hurried into the deep was, "Your most obedient humble servant, sir!"

It fared no better with the intriguing pole. He set to and jostled with the waves, and cried, "For shame!" to his assailants.

But when the huge billow came, it was all up with him. He was snapped like a reed, and flung far away amongst the angry waves.

The boulder-stone, who had witnessed so many storms in his days, remained quite callous during all this uproar, and his stony heart laughed at the havoc and devastation around.

The lovers were not aware that the south-west wind with his wild behaviour had awoke the majestic thunder, slumbering in the clouds. "Reetch!" there whizzed a long, terrific zig-zag flash of lightning, lighting up all the heavens for a moment, and then flinging its wrathful dart to the doomed boulder-stone, splitting its stony heart, though thousands of ages old; and that was the end of the wicked suitor.

The weird old water-sprite had enough to do to keep his coral palace in repair that day, for the warring billows pursued each other in such wild chase that they nearly set afloat the tiles of his silvery roof. But when evening came, and the boisterous south-west wind had hied away on his dark wings, and a genial friendly breeze from the south had replaced him, the water-sprite papa went out of his castle to look at his little darling, the water-lily, and he found her with her slender stem broken and her white chalice crushed, at the foot of the birch; but it was still visible on her snowy cheek, and her petals (even beautiful in their decay), that she had been deprived of her life at a moment when her happiness had reached its height, and when her young floral heart was replete with joy and innocent love.

Then the weird old water-sprite shed tears as large as the eggs of little sparrows, and they trickled down his long flowing beard.

This beloved child (the water-lily) he buried in the earth, beneath the roots of the birch. And the poor birch wept till the tears fell like

rain from his foliage, and the gilded little butterfly cried till she lost her eyes and became stone-blind, and the dew wept till the whole meadow was quite wet, and the golden setting sun wept in the cloud until a beautiful rainbow grew out of his tears and arched the whole heavens over the verdant wood.

But the boulder-stone could not shed any tears, if he had wanted, for his heart was broken in twain, and the sedge-frond lay withered at his feet. The old fisherman looked for his pole in vain; he first thought he would cut down the birch, and make himself a new one, but then it seemed to him it was a pity to cut down such a beautiful young tree, so he allowed it to remain, and that was very properly done by the old fisherman. What do you say?

Next spring, perhaps, a new water-lily will grow at the foot of the birch, near the strand. That will be the child of the beautiful water-lily. I wonder if it will be as meek and humble as its mother.

# THE GREAT QUESTION.

Do you know the one great question which pervades heaven and earth, life and death? Do you know those words which begin at the cradle and do not end even at the grave, but continue to sound evermore throughout eternity? They are only four little simple words,

and yet they embody the great mystery of life and death:

"Do you love me?"

"Do you love me?" asked your mother when she bent over your cradle and gazed at you, her eyes beaming with maternal love. You made no answer, for you could not speak, but perhaps you were already able to hold out your little arms and look into your mother's eyes, and joyfully smile back the love, and she wished for no better, for she read your answer: "Yes, I love you, mother dear, with my whole soul." Happy child! enviable mother! If your baby-smile had not responded, her cheeks would have grown pale, and her heart frozen to ice, and she would have grieved herself to death. But now she knows what she yearned for, and that enabled her in after years patiently to endure all privations; she had her reward of love, what more wanted she?

When you grew up and walked away from your cradle, the same question was put to you by your home and all your friends, "Do you

love us?" If you do not love them, then that home is no longer yours; your friends shun you, and it is all lonely around you, and barren within you; but if you do love them, then everything about you speaks of joy and gladness, and everybody freely forgives you your faults for the sake of your love, which will prevent you from repeating them.

The like conditions prevail everywhere and always. Do you know how it happens that our fields are verdant in the summer, and that we are provided with food, clothes, and a home? They are all gifts from God! Our land becomes verdant and yields fruit as a reward for our love. If we were to despise and abandon it because of its poverty, the fields would cease to clad themselves in verdure, it would instead become like the big island of Nova Zemla, far up in the Arctic regions, where, though it for six months in the year constantly basks in incessant sunshine, yet grows no trees or grass, but lies buried in eternal snow; or it might become like the great Sahara desert, far away

in Africa, where there is never any winter or cold, but which has neither trees nor flowers, only burning sands, and hot scorching winds.

When the poor shepherd-girl wanders through the woodlands, she listens to the soft winds that sigh through the naked branches of the trees, and the birch asks her, "Do you love me?" "Yes, that I do, very much," answers she, and a feeling of joy permeates the very pith of the birch, and the sap rises to his topmost branches, and bursts into budding leaves on his slender twigs. In the same way the soil will say to the farmer who turns the sod, "Do you love me?" "Of course I do," he answers heartily, and the soil nourishes germinating seeds, and waving corn of the coming harvest whisper to each other in the even-tide, "Let us exert ourselves to grow fine tall, that we may yield heavy ears of corn for bread to rejoice the heart of our friend."

Like that speaks the vessel to the sailor, "Do you love me?" "Aye, that you may

be sure of," answers the seaman. Then the vessel spreads out her sails, urged on by the wind, and gladly shouts, "Press on, make haste, my friend is longing impatiently for the loved ones in the haven of his home."

And the iron glowing in the fire, asks the smith, "Do you love me?" "What a question!" exclaims he, and skilfully fashions the loved object with his hammer, until it has received the impress of his mind.

Fred sat one day yawning over his lessons, when the book put the question to him, "Do you love me?" "No, indeed, I don't," the lazy little fellow answered, and all the letters began to dance before him, as if they had been wasps or gnats in the sunshine, and he yawned until he yawned away his whole youth.

"Do you love me?" asked the piano of Anne, when she sat playing tedious scales. "No," she answered, "for I hate you scales, nasty tiresome things!" and the strings snapped, and the keys gave no sound, and

sweet music fled for ever at the touch of Anne's fingers.

But once I knew two poor little children, who had neither books nor piano; Eric's school-book was the fields and meadows; he collected all sorts of plants and flowers, and closely observed how they grew and developed. Maggie's piano was a small harmonica, which she had made herself. "Do you love us?" said the floral children of the woodlands. "Yes, with all my heart," he answered. "Go, then, to the city," they whispered, "and there you will find a sage, who loves us dearly, and who will teach you the secret of our lives, until you become one of the wisest men in the kingdom of nature." The same question quavered gently from Maggie's harmonica. "Do I love you? yes, with all my heart and soul," and the music swelled into clear crystal tones, and she became a most famous minstrel, who knew how to draw tears of sadness or joy from her audiences.

One poor little shepherd-boy once used to sit at eventide in the forest, and gaze wist-

fully up at the stars; then there reached him in dulcet tones from the celestial choirs of the spheres, in soft accents, "Do you love us?" "Yes," said the lad, "and I have loved you as long as I can remember." "Go, then, to the school in the village and ask to be taught knowledge, that you may master the science of our mystic writ." The boy went to school and worked diligently all through the long days; but when night came, he sought the solitude of the forest, to hold sweet converse with the stars, which nobody else understood. Of what did they tell him? Nobody knows, but the boy became a famous man.

A mighty monarch, seated on his throne, asks the question of his vast domain, "Do you love me?" "Yes," answers the country, "you know that we are loyal. Have we not already proved it sufficiently"? And the country in turn puts the question to the ruler, saying, "Do you love me?" "Yes," answers the king, "it is my duty and my pride to do so, and I have proved it to you," and the lord and land keep loyally together in joy and

sorrow, and peace and concord reigns in the hearts of both.

But the question rises higher and higher, and does not die away until it reaches the throne of the Almightly. "Do you love me?" speaks the world to Jehovah; and all creation, men, animals, trees and plants, stones and stars, and the whole wide heaven joins in the anxious question, all repeating in tuneful harmony, "Do you love us?" And the Lord replieth by means of His holy writ, and His ceaseless charity: "Know ye not that I loved you before the world was made, and that all creation is but an uttering of my boundless love? Have I not nourished, and maintained, and protected you since the dawn of time?" And to man He sayeth: "Ye have fallen off from me, and from your high estate, and grieved me with your sins, innumerable as the sands of the ocean, and yet I have given you a Saviour, who suffered and died for you, and through Him have promised you eternal life. Believe ye in Him, so that in the distress and anguish of your sins you may turn to Him for relief;

and should I not love you, my own poor children?"

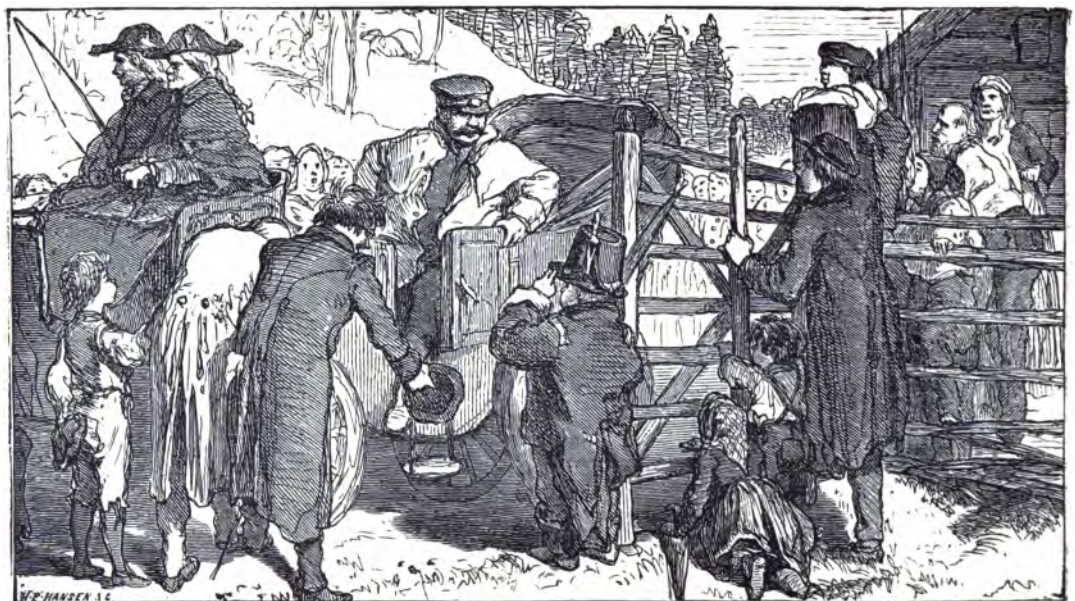
"Yea, behold!" cry all the worlds in return, with one united voice, "Our Lord and God, is full of love and charity, and eternal grace, His love passeth all understanding; no one loveth as He loveth."

And the voice of the Creator speaks to us in the roll of the thunder, in the soft whisperings of the zephyrs, and in our own consciences, and ransacks our very hearts with the question, "Do you love me?"

What answer can we make? We must kneel with downcast eyes, imploring forgiveness: "Lord God, we ought to love Thee before everything, and throughout our lives obey Thy will. But thou knowest well, that we are but poor erring children, who oft have departed from the ways of righteousness; have pity upon us for Christ's sake, and grant us Thy Holy Spirit, that daily we may increase in love to Thee, and serve and praise Thee the length of our days, O Lord! our Strength and our Redeemer."

"Since thou art my child," saith the Lord,

"and love Me with thy whole soul, so love thy neighbour, for My sake, even as thou lovest thyself; for how is it possible to love thy God, and hate thy brother?"



Pikku Matti. W. p. 25.

# PIKKU MATTI.

N yonder hill stands a log-hut, with only one little window, and that so small, that when the dumpling-faced, flaxen-haired little boy who dwells within, peeps out, his rosy features seem to fill the whole frame. Formerly the cot possessed a chimney, was painted red, and a neat wooden paling enclosed the place including a potato-plot. But now it is wretchedly dilapidated, the smoke finding its way out through a hole in the roof, and the wooden railing has long ago tumbled down. The reason of this sad change is because now it is inhabited by only a blind old soldier and his aged wife; they are extremely poor and cannot repair the place themselves, and they would certainly die from sheer starvation if

the old man did not at times earn a trifle by mending fishing-nets, and the old woman make brooms for sale, and the parish doled out to them three sacks of flour a year.

Times were better some four or five years ago, for then there lived with them their son and his wife, a thrifty young couple, who both worked hard to keep everything nice. And then they were all so happy together, until one day misfortune came. One Sunday morning the big boat which brought all the people of the hamlet across the lake to their parish church, was more than usually crowded, and was upset by a heavy squall when far from the shores, and both the son and his wife perished with many others in the treacherous deep. But the old folks had that morning remained at home, the old man because of his blindness, and the old woman to take care of the little child. When the church bells that morning rang out their chimes calling together the flock, it was a funeral dirge for those who so unexpectedly had been called through the portals of death, to gather into the tabernacle of eternal rest and adoration.

The poor old people were thus left to themselves in their lonely hut, alone with their grief, their poverty, and their little grandchild. The only thing they inherited from the dear departed ones was this little lad, called "Matti," and because he was an uncommonly wee thing they gave him the name of "Pikku Matti." Anyone who does not understand the Finnish language must just guess at the meaning of that. His face was round and rosy as a ripe winter-apple; he had large blue, honest eyes, and quite golden hair, in fact that was the only gold he possessed in this world. It was his chubby face that was wont to fill the little window of the cot, whenever anything remarkable happened on the turnpike road. If you are travelling that way you are sure to see him. Perhaps it is a dark, dismal evening in the autumn; then you will see, by the fitful glare of the logs that crackle in the big fire-place of the lonely hut, how the blind old soldier is mending his nets, while his old wife is reading aloud from the Bible, about the poor blind who dwell in darkness, and that to them

has been given a great light which will guide them on their road to heaven, the name of Jesus Christ. And the ruddy light falls upon Pikku Matti, where he sits close by with the kitten on his knees; he listens attentively, as if he understood what his grandmother reads, but at last sleep steals into his dreamy blue eyes, and he leans his soft rosy cheek against the knee of the old dame, and if you are snugly ensconced in your elegant travelling-carriage in the dark road, your eye will glance with mingled joy and envy into the abode of poverty, for there dwell innocence and true devotion, and that peace which prayer produceth to the grieved and afflicted, and that trust in God which is never relied upon in vain. That house contains greater treasures probably than your own home of luxury and splendour.

But if you journey this way on a fine summer day, you will observe near the hut a five-barred gate, and then you must stop until it is opened. But in a minute Pikku Matti comes running to his post; he appears already in the doorway of the hut, how

nimbly his little feet trot over stones and tree-trunks that lie in his way, and his yellow hair streaming in the wind. Now he has come to the gate, throw a coin to him not to disappoint him, give one that shines bright and new, for that is his delight; though so poor, he knows not yet the value of money, and a bright penny creates in him as much happiness as a golden ducat. But be sure you do not throw the coin down before your carriage has quite passed through the gate, for the little boy does not think an inch before his nose, and if he sees the bright object roll in the centre of the road, he will heedlessly throw himself upon his reward, and letting go his hold of the gate it will bang right on your horse's nose, or catch in the carriage, and cause an accident; but don't scold him, for when you were a little boy you were not a bit wiser.

The poor lad lives upon black bread and dumpling, with small-beer, but sometimes he gets a few potatoes and sour milk, which is considered a great feast.

But he thrived on his homely fare and

grew plumper every year. Read he could not, but he could say his prayers, and knew the Ten Commandments; and he could stand on his head, and turn somersaults where the grass was soft; and he could make ducks and drakes on the limpid surface of the lake, when he accompanied his grandmother to the strand to see her wash his shirts; he could also drive a horse and cart along an even road, ride a neighbour's horse to the brook to water it, particularly if anybody went with him; he could detect the difference between the traces of a snipe and a magpie on the new-fallen snow; he could tell the footprints of the wolf on his track; he could make a sledge from small twigs, and create horses and cattle from fir-tree cones with little sticks for legs.

These were his accomplishments, and he was considered very clever for such a wee fellow, but it was barely enough to cover a great deficiency which poor Pikku Matti suffered from, and, in fact, I don't know if I dare tell you what it was,—*he had no breeches!*

But the cause of it was, first, his grandparents were so extremely poor, and then it

was the highest fashion among all the little lads in the hamlet to do without such habiliments, so poor Pikku Matti had to go without; but that was only the custom on week-days, when Sunday came they were all attired like other people. But our little friend had neither for Sunday nor for week-days that which he ought to have possessed, and at times it became a source of great unhappiness to him.

It was a long happy time before he understood that he really was in want of anything, and he was as brave and merry in his little shirt as if there never had existed any unnecessary trammels of other garments. One Sunday morning, however, when the villagers crowded on the shore to embark in their boats for church, Pikku Matti declared that he would go as well.

"That you can't, my dear," said his grandmother.

"Why?" asked Pikku Matti.

"You have no clothes."

This answer set the little boy thinking and wondering.

"I have an old petticoat you might put on,"

she said, "but then everybody would take you to be a girl."

"I don't want to be a girl, I mean to be a man," declared the boy.

"Well, did you ever? they are all alike," laughed his grandmother. "A man must be a man, if he ain't bigger than an elf. You stay at home this time, my boy."

And poor Pikku had to submit.

Some short time after this there was an assize to be held in the neighbouring village. Of course a great concourse of people gathered together. Amongst others came Wipplusti with his peep-show. Of course you know Wipplusti. Everybody wanted to have a peep at his show, for there was to be seen the Emperor Boney with his golden crown on his head, and a Turkish sabre trailing at his feet, and there was the great Mogul with his hoops around his waist, and with his horrible big beard, and the giant Bumburrifex, and the hobgoblin of the ancient castle of Åbo, the old capital of Finland. Some people gave Wipplusti a few pence, others a small loaf of bread, while others gave him nothing at all.

Indeed, there were some that only bantered him; but, everybody enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

These wonderful things were told to Pikku Matti by other youngsters, and he immediately determined to have a peep at the show.

"It really can't be done, my child," declared his grandmother.

"Why not, Granny?" he asked.

"Because there will be such a great number of the gentry, my lad. The judge and his secretary, and the writer, and the bailiff, and the constable himself, and the road-surveyor, and I don't know who; you can't go among them without breeches."

Pikku Matti had a severe struggle with himself, but Wipplusti's peep-show was a very great temptation, and so at last he said:

"What if you should lend me your petticoat, Granny?"

"There he is at last," said his grandmother, and laughed heartily when he had got the petticoat on, and was cutting rather a sorry figure in the centre of the kitchen floor. "Now you do look like a little girl."

"If I do look like a girl I won't go to the village," said Matti, nearly crying; "I don't want to be a girl, but to be a man."

"Certainly you look like a lass," said the old woman, "but you can always tell anybody you meet that you are not a girl, but a boy."

"Well, so I can," thought Pikku, and off he started.

Not far from home he was overtaken by a gentleman, who stopped him and asked:

"Can you tell me, my little girl, if it is far to where the assizes are held?"

"I am not a girl, I am a boy!" quickly answered Matti.

"That you don't look, anyhow," said the traveller.

Pikku Matti had nothing to say for himself, but when he came to the place where the court was held, he cried out aloud so that everybody could hear him:

"I am not a girl, though I look like one; I am a young man!"

All the old men and women laughed heartily, and the lads and lasses gathered around him, and clapped their hands, and cried:

"Well, Maggie, my dear girl, who gave you that fine gown?"

"It is my grandmother's petticoat, you boobies, and not mine," answered Pikku. "I am no Maggie, my name is Matti, that you might see."

Then one of the biggest and most teasing of the boys lifted up Pikku Matti on to his shoulders, and galloped with him to where the peep-show was being exhibited, and called out loudly:

"Look and behold! a penny a peep to see a young man cut a dash in his granny's petticoat!"

Pikku grew white with anger, and tugged his tormentor's woolly hair with all his might.

"It is not my petticoat, it is my grandmother's," he bawled, and began crying with vexation; but the cruel jester continued:

"Look at a lad in an old woman's petticoat!" and off they again started, jumping and struggling all round the court-yard.

Never was boy in such perplexity before. He wept, and yelled, and kicked, and fought

to get free, and when at last he became too troublesome for his foe and got loose, he took to his heels as fast as he could run away, was tripped up by his long skirts, then got on his feet again, nearly choked with anger, stumbled anew, rose again, gathered up the petticoat around him, and cut along the road as quickly as his nimble little feet would allow him, till from sheer fatigue, on reaching home, he tumbled head over heels once more on the threshold, and out of breath he panted:

"Take off the petticoat, I will have no more of this, I am a boy."

"Don't cry, Pikku dear," said his grandmother kindly. "When you become a man, you will show them what stuff you are made of."

"Yes, that you will, my lad," said his grandfather, "and then I will lend you my old regimental trousers!"

They loved poor Pikku Matti, these simple old folks, for, next to God, he was the only joy and consolation in their hard life. They would gladly have bestowed gold-stitched velveteens upon him if it had been in their

power. He got a piece of bread and butter, and that was so great a solace to him in his grief, that he soon forgot all about his annoying adventure. He seated himself in a corner of the hut, enjoying his extra treat, and soon thought no more of the shame and insults heaped upon him when dressed in an old woman's petticoat.

Some time after this frequent clouds of dust rose in the high road, so many messengers were sent past there on foot and on horseback, for a great man who was travelling through the country was expected this way. Rumour said "he was such a great dignitary that the King could not be grander." People congregated from all parts to have a look at him, and wonderful things were told of him. It was said, indeed, that "he rode in a golden carriage, drawn by a team of twelve horses, and that from head to foot he was dressed in silver and brass-foil," which latter was the grandest thing they could think of. The little children imagined that the great man would carry a knapsack on his back, filled with silver coins and sticks of liquorice, which

he would liberally scatter among them while passing along the road.

These rumours reached the ears of Pikku Matti, and he immediately declared, as usual, that he would go to meet the great mysterious traveller. He had a will of his own, poor little Matti, as often is the case with grandchildren pets.

"Little boys must obey their elders," observed his grandmother.

"And you know that you have no clothes," added the grandfather mildly, "or maybe you wish to borrow Granny's petticoat again?"

"I don't want any more petticoat," cried poor Matti, and turned as red as a raspberry at the bare recollection of all the insults he had been exposed to on account of that hated garment. "No, never more in this world will I put on a petticoat—I want Grandfather's regimentals."

"Do you hear that, Wife?" said the old man. "Well, lead me up to the garret, and we will try if the things can be made to fit you."

Agile as a kitten, he darted up the ladder

that his aged grandfather had such difficulty in mounting. They went to the big green box that stood in a corner, and which had always inspired Pikku Matti with a lively curiosity whenever he had been in the loft to set traps for mice.

The first thing that caught his eager eyes was a large sabre with a bright scabbard.

"I want that sword," cried he, impatiently.

"You pigmy!" said his grandfather. "Here hold the sabre while I get the regimentals out of the box."

Pikku Matti received the sabre from his hands, but it was so heavy that he could scarcely hold it.

The old soldier patted him on the cheek and said:

"When you grow up to become a man, maybe you also shall carry a sabre, and wield it manfully in defence of your country. Should you like to do that, Pikku?"

"Yes, that I would!" quickly answered the brave little boy, and straightened himself up to look as big as possible. "I will cut the heads off the lot of them."

"Aha!" exclaimed the old man. "What, all of them? That depends upon whom you fight against."

"Yes," rejoined the little belligerent, and wondered for a moment whom the grandfather meant. "I shall cut off the heads of the wolves, and hawks, and all stinging-nettles, and everybody who may do any ill to my grannys. Yes, that I will, and cut off the heads of anybody who dares to call me a girl, besides."

"Well, well, laddie, bridle your courage a bit, and give a little quarter to some of them. Here are the trousers—I suppose I must give you the coat as well."

"Yes, Gran, and the sword and the cap too."

"Well, you are a fire-eater, and no mistake!" rejoined the old man. "You shall have them all on one condition—that you go no further than the five-barred gate when the great man comes."

"Yes, Grandfather."

The two had scarcely descended the ladder again, before the bailiff came tearing like a

whirlwind along the road, and bawling right and left to the people to keep out of the way of the great dignitary who would pass by in a few minutes. Everybody seemed in a flurry, and how they bustled about in the hut! Grandfather's trousers were hastily pulled on Matti's tiny legs. They were grey, with narrow light blue stripes, but they were so big and roomy, that Pikku could perfectly well have crept into one leg. What a sight it was! but on they must go. They were turned up at the bottom half-way, and tied under his arms with a kerchief. As much trouble gave the coat, which was made of the same kind of grey stuff with blue facings, and seemed rather intended for a giant than a pigmy. When he had it on the sleeves reached the ground, and the skirts swept the floor.

"That will never do," said the grandmother, and at once began to pin up the sleeves and lappets.

Pikku Matti thought all this was unnecessary bother. To crown the work the big shako was put on his head, and would most assuredly have extinguished him quite had it

not been well lined with hay. At last the heavy sabre was hung trailing from his side, and now the pigmy warrior was declared fully equipped.

No hero ever returned from a victory prouder than Pikku Matti was, as he marched forth in his first uniform. His rotund little figure disappeared amongst the clothes like a mouse in a sack. Nothing was to be seen but his blue honest little eyes, his chubby cheeks, and his little upturned nose, peeping out from the narrow space between the standing collar and the shako.

When thus martially accoutred, with great gravity he emerged from the door, then the sabre rattled against the loose stones in the yard, the pins fell out, and the sleeves and lappets had it all their own way; the shako became top-heavy, and took bearings right and left, while the brave warrior seemed almost overpowered by the weight of his glory. The poor old couple had not laughed so heartily for many a day. The old man, who could hear everything distinctly, though he saw nothing, turned the wee lad round several

times and kissed by mistake his little tilted nose, that protruded beyond the coat collar, and said, "Bless you, Pikku Matti, my boy; may never a worse man than you will be ever wear the uniform of the Old Guards."

"Right wheel, march!" "Halt, attention!" called out the old man now; "when the great man comes you must salute him this way," and then he taught the young recruit to stand straight as a gun-rod, to look fierce, to keep his left arm stiff by his side, and with the right hand to salute.

"Yes, Grandfather," said Matti, who was an apt recruit.

Pikku Matti had barely arrived at his post by the five-barred gate before a dense cloud of dust was descried on the road, and the great man soon came along, travelling at a fearful speed, which made the carriage wheels strike fire against the stones; now he was nearing—hey! how he goes, then the coachman suddenly called out, "Whoa! hi, there, open the gate quick!" The road-surveyor had placed himself at the five-barred gate, to see that everything would pass off with military

precision in the twinkle of an eye, which would convey to the great man a very favourable opinion of the order and efficiency of the roads. But when the carriage came dashing along, the road-surveyor, waiting to bow very humbly to his superior, forgot that he was standing on the edge of the dyke which skirted the road, lost his balance, and tumbled over into the muddy water, and his man, who was placed ready at the gate, was so astonished by the sudden disappearance of his master, from whom he was to receive the word of command, that he never thought to open the gate, and thus it remained closed in the very face of the grand traveller.

The carriage was, therefore, stopped, the dignitary looked astonished, and the coachman continued to bawl "Open the gate!" Then Pikku Matti bethought himself and advanced, though dreadfully encumbered, opened the gate and saluted exactly as his grandfather had taught him, though looking somewhat like a dog who had been trained to sit upright.

The coachman cracked his whip, the horses started forward, but the gentleman in the

carriage cried out at the same moment, " Stop, stop ! " and the equipage came once more to a standstill.

" What funny little fellow is that in the uniform of the Old Guards ? " asked the traveller, and laughed so heartily that the carriage almost shook.

Pikku Matti was not in the least degree disconcerted by this, he only thought how his grandfather had taught him to make the salutation, and he repeated it, but this time with the left hand, looking all the time as grave as possible.

This amused the inquirer very much, and he asked of the bystanders, " Who are the parents of the lad?"

The surveyor had by this time crept out of the ditch, and hastened to inform him that he was a poor orphan, who lived at the hut of his grandfather, close by, a blind old soldier kept by the parish and named Havok.

The officious narrator imparted this information in a contemptible tone, which seems to be the orthodox way when a man in power condescends to speak of a pauper; but he was

very much astonished when he found that his superior, on hearing this, alighted from his carriage and went straight to the hut.

I wish you had been there! The old woman nearly fell off her chair, when such a visitor entered her humble abode; but the old man, who could not see anything, had more courage, and with due respect, indicated where he knew the settle stood. "The blessings of the day upon you, my friends," said the stranger, and heartily shook their hands. "Somehow, I fancy that I know you, old comrade," he continued, scrutinising the wrinkled features of the aged soldier; "are you not Havok, No. 39, from my regiment?"

"Yes, Captain," answered he promptly, recognising with amazement the voice of his former commanding officer.

"How glad I am that at last I have found you!" said the former captain, now governor of a province. "Have you forgotten how, at the battle of Jutas, during the thick of the fight, when I was sore wounded and exhausted, you carried me on your back across the ford, and saved me from falling

into the hands of the enemy? If you have forgotten it, do you think I can ever do so? After peace was proclaimed I quite lost sight of you; I sought long but in vain, and at last I gave you up for dead; but now I have found you I will provide for yourself, your wife, and the little lad—a fine boy!" And the hero of many battles caught up Pikku Matti in his arms, and gave him such a smacking kiss that the shako tumbled off his head, the sabre rattled, and all the pins came out and let down his coat and trousers.

"Let me alone," vociferated Matti to his new-found friend; "now you have knocked off my hat, and Grandfather will scold me!"

"Gracious, Sir!" said the old woman, who felt quite put about on account of Pikku Matti; "please take no notice of what the lad says. Alackaday! he is not used to speak to great folks."

"We will get a new hat for old Grandfather," said the governor, consoling him; "and you, kind old dame, have no concern for the lad's straightforward talk, I like a good-spirited boy. Listen to me, Pikku

Matti. You look to me as if you meant to be a fine fellow when you grow up; would you like to become a brave soldier, like your grandfather has been?"

"Grandfather says, that depends upon whom I fight against," answered Matti.

"You are a smart little fellow," said the governor, laughing; "you have no lack of courage, at any rate."

"Yes, gracious Sir, but the reason is, this is the first day he ever wore trousers, and you know courage comes with a lad's first breeches."

"Say, rather, that he adheres to the uniform of the Old Guards," answered the governor. "Much glory still clings with the smell of powder to these threadbare garments, and such rich treasures of memories past, are transmitted as heirlooms from one generation to another; but new times have come, and the boy may yet be needed for the defence of his country. Are you strong, my little man?"

Pikku Matti did not answer, he only held out the middle finger of his right hand, challenging the governor to a trial of strength that way.

"I see by the look of you that you will become a very bear in strength when you have grown up to be a man. Will you come with me, and you will then have white bread to eat, and as much milk as you can drink, and it is not unlikely that sometimes you may get a stick of liquorice and a bun, when you have been uncommonly good."

"Shall I have a horse to ride on?" asked Matti.

"Yes, that you shall," answered the governor.

Pikku thought for a while of these things, his small blue eyes wandered from the governor to his grandfather, and from him to his grandmother, and again from her back to the traveller, but at last he crept behind his blind old grandfather saying, "I will stay with my grandfather and grandmother."

"But," said the old soldier, his voice trembling with emotion, "dear lad, if you remain with us, you will only get black bread and water, and salt dumpling. Did you not hear what the gentleman offers you? white bread and milk, and a horse to ride on."

"I will stay with you, Grandfather, I will not leave you," Pikku answered, nearly choking with tears.

"You are a fine lad, such as a boy ought to be," said the governor, his eyes filling with tears, and he patted the little fellow on his chubby cheeks. "You remain with your grandfather, my boy, and I will take care that neither he, your grandmother, nor yourself ever want for anything; and when you are a man come then to me, and I will give you land to till and a forest to cut wood for yourself; and if you become a peasant or a soldier it matters not, so long as you remain an honest and faithful son to your country. Am I in the right, Pikku?"

"Yes, Sir," answered the boy, stiff and erect.

"God bless you, Child," said the grandparents simultaneously, deeply touched at heart.

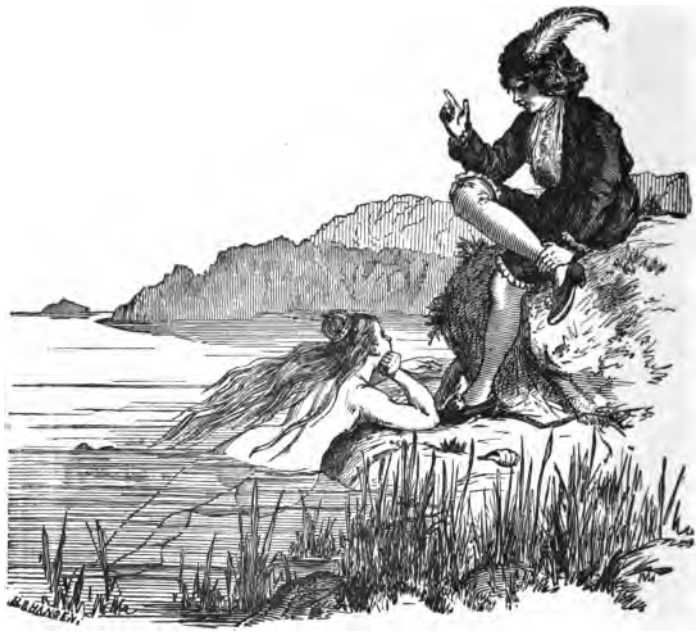
"God bless our dear country, and give to it many faithful sons like you, Pikku," said the governor, "for many a one deserts the dear old land on account of its poverty, and

seek to gain the leaven loaves abroad. But what do they gain thereby? God and their conscience only knows, but the land of their birth gains nothing by them. Honour thy father and thy mother in their poverty, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

"That stands in my spelling-book," observed Pikku Matti.

"But it does not stand in everyone's heart," rejoined the governor.

# Tracings on the Beach.



HAVE you ever observed the marks on the sand along the beach, near the wooded hill yonder? How the fine white sand shows numberless meandering tracings and tiny ridges

down to the very water's edge? Many a time when I have seen huge crested billows rush furiously over the beach, it has been a wonder to me that they have not quite swept away the tiny marks in the sand; but the waves of the sea seem not inclined to do this; they allow the tracings to wind their curling way along as before, rolling over them with din and roar, and then surging back again into the mystic deep.

The tiny tracings on the sand are the footprints of the little waves, the curly-headed children of the sea, mirthfully playing on the smooth, soft, sandy beach. Every time the storm howls, the king of the mighty deep says to his vassals, the ocean waves, "Onward! Onward to the rocky shore! But on the beach are my little children playing; let no one dare to interfere with them, nor sweep away their footprints on the sand."

In the very depth of the ocean is Neptune's palace, with crystal walls, and floor and thresholds of mother-of-pearl, and curiously shapen shells. There dwell the sons and daughters of the king, the blue billows, and

there lives also his favourite child, his darling young wavelet, Unda Marina, blue-eyed, and with a hair of flowing silver tresses. When she plays on the beach she traces with her silver shoe these gracefully meandering lines on the sandy floor, which no surf is ever permitted to efface. There thousands of young brother and sister wavelets chase each other perpetually in merry glee, and all of them trace their tiny footprints on the sand, but none is so transparent, so lively, and so graceful in his movements as Unda Marina.

When the little fishes bathe in the shallow waters on a warm summer day, and the dazzling white sea-gulls dart like shooting-stars overhead, Unda Marina is seen tumbling about in the waters, turning aside for the sailing-boats, and dancing around the buoy bathing in the sunlight. But when the sun rises early in the morning from his ocean bed, and when at night he sinks into rest in the embrace of the dark wood, then only splashes Unda Marina in the shallow water, and gently sings a monotonous song of times that are past, and friends long since departed

from the land of the living into the unfathomable silent eternity.

Unda Marina had a friend, the youngest of the princes of the forest, a slender dark-curled darling, whose green jacket always is adorned with beauteous flowers, and who always carried his pockets full of nuts, and had a heron's feather in his brown cap. Florio came often to the shore where Unda Marina played, and they soon became great friends. Sometimes they teased each other a little; Florio then threw twigs and pebbles at Unda Marina, while she by way of return spattered briny spray over his velvet shoes. Then Florio laughed as the forest laughs when the wind rustles in its foliage, and Unda Marina laughed, as the waves laugh when the wind dallies with their streaming locks. And there between in the still summer nights they played at being engaged to each other; then Florio used to seat himself on the grassy carpet spread on the shore, while Unda Marina leant leisurely against the mound of the beach, and thus they told each other fairy tales. Florio knew both merry

and melancholy stories, some about the ogres of the forest who hide behind the trunks of the trees, and he could also relate how the lions hunt in the dim moonlight, and about the pranks and tricks which the zephyr plays with the pinks and geraniums hemming the meadow. Unda Marina told of olden times, when the ocean billows rolled over the whole land, and worked great caves and hollows in the rocky shore; and she described how the big whale pulled her father's car through a whole forest of corals in the depth of the bottomless sea.

Thus they had met every evening on the sea-shore for a long, long time, but still they remained little children, for the sons of the forest and the daughters of the sea do not grow up like the children of man; they live many thousands of years, as long as earth herself, and so remain for ever young to enjoy their merry sports in the glamour and gloaming of the evening. They loved each other so dearly that a white sea-gull, who had frequently observed them playing on the beach, was wont to say to his neighbour the

great sea-eagle, "Florio and Unda Marina are likely to become one day wedded, and then you and I shall be invited to the nuptials."

"That depends on whether the marriage will take place in the palace of the forest king," said the eagle, "but if it is to be at the bottom of the sea, the parental home of the bride, I would rather be excused, and shall decline the invitation."

"I did not think of that," said the sea-gull, "but if it comes to that, I know how to dive, and it is likely enough I shall go, for there will surely be many delicate dishes of fish served up for the delectation of the wedding guests."

Thus spoke the aërial world about Florio and Unda Marina. One evening the king of the seas was riding in a car, a splendid large shell, and was drawn by a big whale to the shore, where his daughter, the little princess, was telling fairy tales to the prince of the forest. There had arisen a difference between the realms of the forest and the sea, and they quarrelled about their respective boundaries,

and blamed each other for encroaching upon each others' possessions. The king of the mighty sea grew angry when he saw Prince Florio speak in such a friendly way to Unda Marina, and hurled, in wrath, a huge billow towards the shore, which splashed the prince's fine velvet jacket all over with briny spray, and tore the heron-feather from his cap.

Unda Marina sank sorrowful into the deep, and Florio returned exasperated to the wood. But when his father, the forest king, heard how his favourite son had been insulted, he flew into a storm of passion, and sent forth an army of whirlwinds that bestrewed the whole beach with thick layers of sand, so that the king of the sea lost a great part of his domain. This only aggravated him the more, for he despatched immense billows to overwhelm and flood the forest, tear up the trees, inundate the ground and bury it in the waters. Thus arose the interminable war between the forest and the sea, which is carried on to this day as often as the two monarchs are in bad humour. But at times

there is a short truce, when the waves proceed gently towards the shore, and when might be seen in the twilight of the evening the foot-prints of Unda Marina upon the fine white sand.

But Florio and she meet very seldom now-a-days, and only in great secrecy to repeat to one another the old fairy legends, and to dance playfully with the other wavelets on the beach. She sometimes swims quite alone to the shore, when her graceful white neck may be discerned, if the sun breaks through the dark clouds. Sometimes she is heard to sing a plaintive song at evening time, and anyone who understands the language of the waves will hear how she calls upon her friend, who is far away, sighing, "My playmate is away, away. The joy of the sea-shore is lost to me, lost to me. Longing and lonely I fall asleep upon the soft cushions of the sandy beach. The forest and the sea are parted friends; the sombre pine raises his foliage crown on high, but he can never, never descend into the mystic deep. But still I see him, my own Florio, ay, for every

evening he mirrors his sylvan crown in my blue eyes." Mourn not, poor lone one, the Creator's mercy will one day unite those friends who long have been parted, and the days will once more return when Unda Marina will swim with joy to the shore, and Florio find her foot-prints in the silver-white sand on the beach during the calm of the evening.

# HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER.

HIS is a short story, but a very remarkable one, for by it any one may clearly see that it is the will of God that children should honour their parents. Slight and ingratitude of a child towards his parents are the blackest sins of all, and never escape being severely punished, if not to-day or to-morrow, in the future, when the children have grown up themselves.

It is an old story, which has been told by many a one before me, but it will bear oft repeating.

There was a man and wife, with a large family of little children, and with them stayed their old grandfather. The old man was quite hoary with age, and so feeble that his hands

trembled, and he invariably spilled the soup upon the clean napkin. He could not help it.

Both the husband and wife were hard-hearted and ungrateful people. They had forgotten what trouble and care their parents had with them when they were small, and had not then acquired good manners. So they gave utterance to these hard words: "Listen, Grandfather, if you don't give over spilling your soup, we will put you in a corner of the room, where you may eat, like a pig, out of a trough."

But the aged grandfather could not alter his ways, he was so very old. So the cruel people placed him in a corner, and put a trough before him as if he had been a pig, there to sit and have his meals by himself out of it, while the husband and wife were seated at the table enjoying themselves.

This cut the dear old man to the heart, for it is a hard thing to see oneself despised on account of extreme old age, and that too by one's own children. Ingratitude is the blackest sin the world knows.

The old grandfather sat by himself in the

corner, unobserved and silent. Tears found their way down his shrivelled face into his long flowing beard, as white as snow. God only, who sees everything, witnessed the old man's grief and the ingratitude of the husband and wife, but he knew how to soften their ard hearts.

One day when the aged grandfather was relegated as usual to his allotted corner, and the husband and wife were seated at the table, one of their little children, a boy, only four years of age, was on the floor cutting a piece of wood with a knife.

"What are you doing, my little lad?" the father asked.

"I am making a trough," the child answered.

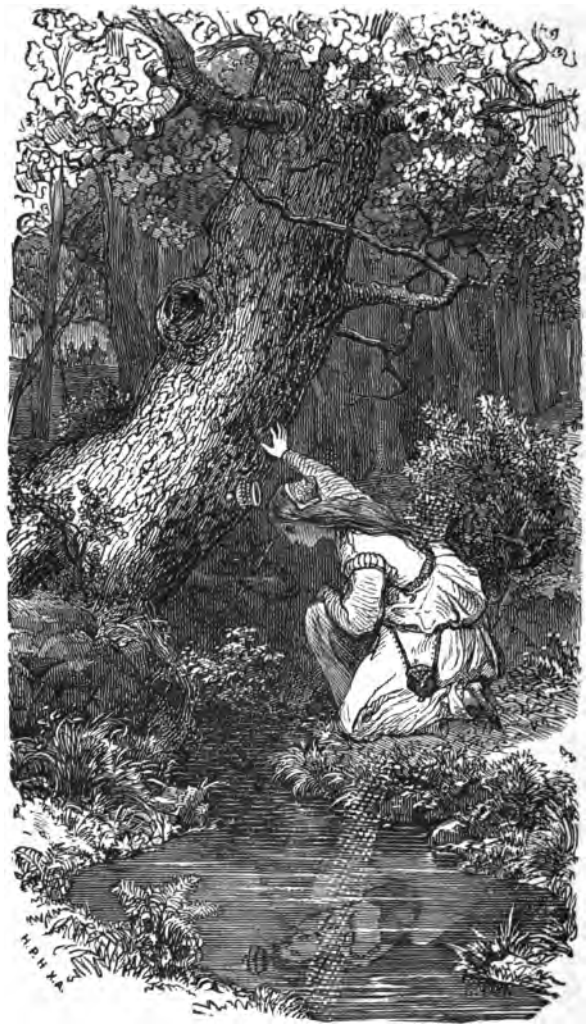
"What are you going to do with that?" the father said.

"When you and mother have grown old I will put you in the corner, like you have done with grandfather, to eat out of the trough I am making," the boy answered.

The husband looked quietly at his wife, and God opened his eyes, and he perceived how

greatly he had sinned in his ingratitude to his father. It seemed as if his own conscience had spoken through the mouth of the child, thus: "As you have despised your parent in his old age, so also shall your children despise you when you have grown old."

And they both burst into tears, and advanced to the old man in the corner, and embraced him, saying, "Forgive us the wrong we have done you! Henceforth you shall always sit at our table, and in the place of honour too, for now we have been reminded that we ought never to forget the Fifth Commandment: 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'"



ADALMINA'S PEARL. W. p. 65.

# ADALMINA'S PEARL.

A FAIRY TALE.

NCE upon a time there was a king and a queen who had a little girl, and since she was the daughter of a king she was styled a princess.

She was called Adalmina, and was their only child. The consequence was that they loved her very dearly, almost too much, for God does not like us to idolize anyone or anything, for that is ignoring the precepts of the Bible, which says "that we must love God with all our heart."

When the little princess was christened there were two good fairies invited to act as sponsors, such was the custom with the kings; one was attired in red and the other in blue, and the two beneficent fairies did not forget to bestow upon the little princess their

customary gifts. The red fairy gave a real pearl of priceless value, which was of such peerless beauty that its equal was nowhere to be found, and with it followed three endowments. "As long as Adalmina wears the pearl," said the fairy, "she will every day increase in beauty, wealth, and wisdom; but if she loses it, no one can prevent that at the same time she will lose the three precious gifts, and they will never return unless she recover the pearl." That was the decision of the first fairy.

But the blue fairy said: "On Adalmina has been bestowed three such splendid gifts, that few wish for anything better in this world. Still there is one gift remaining which exceeds them all, and that I will bestow upon her, on one condition—as long as the princess holds possession of the pearl, and the three endowments appertaining, my gift will be of no avail; but should she lose her pearl, her beauty, wealth, and wisdom, then she will get in exchange from me the fourth gift, which is, a humble heart: such is my decision." And with that the two fairies

nodded farewell and disappeared like fleeting clouds in the summer sky.

The king and queen were highly delighted. They thought to themselves: "If Adalmina becomes beautiful, rich, and wise, it will not much matter about her heart. We will take great care of the pearl, and then we can very well do without the mean gift bestowed by the blue fairy. Aye, but the red fairy knew better what becomes a princess; her gifts were right royal endowments. But the blue fairy was very niggardly, that must be owned; she threw the dear child alms as we throw a penny to a beggar-girl on the high-road."

The king caused a golden crown to be made which fitted the head of the little princess exactly; but it was so contrived that as Adalmina grew bigger the crown increased in proportion, and fitted always as well as at first; but for everybody else the remarkable crown was either too large or too small. Topmost in the crown was the precious pearl, encompassed so firmly and securely that it was quite impossible to lose it.

The crown was placed on the Princess

Adalmina's head, and she wore it constantly, both when she slept in her gilded cradle, and also when she ran about playing in the castle.

But since the king and queen were very anxious less she should lose the pearl, they had sternly commanded that the attendants were not to allow the princess to go beyond the gate which separated the royal gardens from the park. She was constantly escorted by four valets and four women-in-waiting whenever she went out. They were all strictly enjoined to guard well the princess and her wonderful pearl. Indeed, if they were to prove negligent they were in immediate danger of making a fatal acquaintance with the grim headsman, attired all in scarlet, wearing an awful big beard, and carrying the dreadful axe, which was anything but a plaything.

Thus the princess grew up, and everything came to pass exactly as the red fairy had promised. She developed into the most perfect princess the world had ever seen. Yes, of such exceeding rare beauty, that her

eyes sparkled like two silvery stars of an evening in spring; and wherever she went golden sunshine spread around her, and all the gorgeous flowers in the garden made a low obeisance to her, at the same time saying, "You are far prettier than we!"

And she grew so immensely rich that inexhaustible treasures seemed to be showered upon her by the fairy of fortune. The floor in her room was made of silver and mother-of-pearl; the walls consisted of huge mirrors, reflecting in a dazzling maze the brilliant rubies inlaid in the golden ceiling, and which told with marvellous effect when the perfumed lamps were lit at night. The Princess Adalmina took her food from golden vessels, she slept in a golden bed, and dressed in robes of golden tissue; yea, if it had been possible she would have eaten gold, but it was too hard to bite; and she was so shrewd that she at once could solve the most difficult riddles; and as for her lessons, she had only just to glance at them and she would remember them perfectly. All the sages of the realm came to the court to put puzzling questions to the princess, and

they all agreed that so wise and shrewd a princess as Adalmina had never existed in the world before, and never would again.

This was all very well, and it is no sin to be beautiful, rich, and wise when one knows rightly how to use these heaven-bestowed gifts, but that is very difficult.

The king and queen thought in the excess of their joy that their daughter was the best and most perfect being in the whole world, and as ill-luck would have it, Adalmina began to think so too. When everybody constantly repeated that she was a thousand times more beautiful, wealthy, and wise than anybody else, she readily believed it, but this engendered pride in her heart, which made her look with scorn upon everybody else, her own parents included.

Deplorable child! it was a dark spot on the brightness of her beauty, it was poverty in all her wealth, it was the greatest folly in all her wisdom; and she was very nearly lost to herself through that, for her pride increased with her years, and thus her vain-glory was accompanied by many sins, so that she

gradually became bad at heart, cruel, avaricious, and envious. When she saw a pretty flower in the garden she eagerly put her foot upon it, crushing it to death, for she allowed no one to be admired but herself. When she saw some princess riding in a gilded carriage she felt very much annoyed, for she did not like anyone to be rich but herself; and if anybody spoke of any young girl who was amiable, good, and prudent, she cried from sheer vexation, for she could not bear to hear anybody being praised but herself. Adalmina chided all who did not flatter her, and followed out the bent of her inclinations, and yet she despised the most abject slaves of her will. She was a perfect tyrant, whom all dreaded and no one loved. The king and queen were the only persons in the whole realm who did not feel scandalized at her intolerable pride.

One day when she was about fifteen years of age she went for a walk in the royal garden. When she came to the gate that opened into the park it was locked, and no one dared to open it contrary to the king's command. The four women-in-waiting and the four valets

attending her, all refused for the first time to obey the princess' command to open it. Then she became so awfully angry that it appeared as if a dark veil had obscured her radiant beauty. She struck her faithful servants in the face, ran away from them, and escaped over the gate, and when the amazed attendants began to pursue her she increased her speed until she was quite lost in the intricacies of the wild woodlands.

She at last felt tired and thirsty for the first time in her life, and seated herself at a sylvan spring to rest; she even condescended to fetch water with her own royal and dainty hands, and drink in the primitive manner which poor people do, who have no servant curtseying to them with a glass on a tray. She observed her own image reflected in the clear water. "Ah, how beautiful I am!" she said to herself, and with that she leaned her head over the false mirror the better to behold herself,—when, splash! in tumbled the golden crown with the pearl from off her head, and disappeared in an instant in the rippling water of the deep spring. She scarcely noticed it,

for she was so taken with her own beauty. But an extraordinary change now took place, for the troubled spring had barely regained its wonted smooth surface before she saw reflected quite another being. She saw no longer a young princess of fabulous beauty in gold embroidered garb, with jewels in her tresses, and earrings of sparkling diamonds; instead she beheld only a poor, ugly beggar-girl, bareheaded, barefooted, clothed in rags, and with matted hair. And on the instant all her vaunted wisdom vanished, she became as foolish and stupid as if she had never been taught anything in her life; but the strangest of all, she at the same moment lost all her memory, so that she no longer knew who she was, whence she came, or where she was going. She was only half conscious of some wonderful change having taken place within her, and this frightened her, so that she ran away from the spring further into the forest, without aim or intention.

The night deepened the darkness of the forest, and the wolves began to howl around her. She trembled with fear, and ran fran-

tically along at random, until at last she descried a faint light glimmering among the trees. When she arrived at the place she found a small hut where lived a poor old woman. "Poor child," said she, "where do you come from so late at night?"

But the girl could give her no answer, she could neither tell her name, nor where her parents lived. This the old woman thought strange, and took pity upon her, saying: "Since you are so poor and lonely in the world, you may remain with me; I am just now in need of some one to tend my goats in the wood, and you shall have the place, poor child, if you are kind and good, and content to live on bread and water with a cup of goats-milk sometimes for a treat." For this the child felt very grateful, and kissed the hands of the poor old woman. Although Adalmina was not aware of it, yet the blue fairy had kept her word. She now possessed that which was better than beauty, wisdom, and wealth, a pure and meek heart; she felt far happier now she tended the goats and lived upon her meagre fare, and slept upon

a bed of straw and moss; and she was also far better off than before, for a humble heart brought many precious blessings with it, such as a good conscience, a contented mind, peace, quiet, charity, and love, though lowly now her lot in life; and wherever she went there seemed to flow a genial sunshine around her, not caused by any external beauty, but that produced by peace and love, which, like an aureole, surrounds the kind-hearted and pious in this world, whose very souls beam with love, like the radiant and beautiful faces of the angels when they on soft white wings float gently into the habitations of men.

In the king's palace was a terrible ado when the princess disappeared. It was of no avail that the poor waiting-women and the valets had almost grown mad with fear and despair, for having allowed their charge to escape over the gate. They were all thrown into a deep dungeon, where they could see neither the sun nor the moon, and to complete their terrors the scarlet-clad headsman was posted at the door with his axe.

The king and queen were quite inconsolable

in their grief. All their subjects were compelled to put on deep mourning, and all public places were draped in sables, and upon all church doors notices were placed informing everybody "that whoever could discover the Princess Adalmina should have her for wife, if nothing else would satisfy him, besides half the kingdom for a dowry, as a reward." Those were the customary terms offered in those times on the like occasions, as everybody well knows.

It was a splendid reward, certainly, for anyone who might chance to find the lost princess. Many were the princes and knights who essayed to earn it. For three years they traversed the world in all directions, both winter and summer, and eagerly continued their search without even finding so much as the gilt heel of Adalmina's shoe.

At last it happened that the young and clever Prince Sigismund, of Gaul, during his endeavours to find the princess, chanced to go to the hut of the old woman, where she sat attired in deep mourning, though of coarsest stuff. But black it was at any rate,

and even the goats on the hill-side were black and white, as if in obedience to the king's behests.

"Who are you mourning for, old dame?" asked the prince.

"Know you not that the king has commanded everybody to put on mourning for the lost princess?" answered the old woman. "Though I really don't think there was much harm done in losing her, though, forsooth, she was both comely and rich, and shrewd withal; but people say she was shamefully proud and cruel at heart, so that nobody could love her."

At this moment Adalmina returned with the goats from the wood. The prince looked at her and thought it strange that a girl who was so poor and ugly could attract him so; in fact, so much, that he felt a warm regard spring up in his heart for her at once, though he had scarcely seen the tip of her nose. He asked her if she had seen the princess.

"No," answered Adalmina.

"It is very strange," continued the prince. "For three long years I have scarcely thought

of anything else but my little princess. But now I will seek her no longer, but have a castle built for me in this forest, and dwell here for the rest of my days."

And he had a castle built quite near the spring where Adalmina had undergone the transformation. Then it happened to him on a sultry day that he felt himself thirsty, and leaned over the spring to drink.

"What might that be that glitters so beautifully in the water?" he said to himself. "I will find out what it is."

The prince bent further over the spring, and thrust his arm into the water, and brought up a most beautiful crown, tipped with a real pearl! Then the thought struck him: "What if it be Adalmina's pearl!" He went at once to the royal castle, and no sooner had the king and queen seen the precious gem than they both simultaneously exclaimed:

"Lo! Adalmina's crown and the fairy's gift. Oh, where can she herself be, our beautiful, darling little princess?"

Then the king bethought himself that if his daughter were still alive, she would by this

time be eighteen years of age. He remembered the conditions the red fairy had laid down when she bestowed her gift, and he began to surmise the course of events which had really taken place. He therefore again announced from the church portals, "that all girls who were eighteen years of age should come to the royal castle-yard, to try on the crown, and she on whose head it fitted exactly should be accepted as the real and long-lost princess, and Prince Sigismund of Gaul would espouse her for his wife." It need scarcely be said that all the girls in the kingdom eagerly hastened to the court-yard of the palace, and those who were more or less than eighteen pretended not to be aware of the fact.

It was a glorious summer day, and at least a thousand girls were arranged in rows to try their fortune. From early dawn until late in the evening the crown was passed from head to head, after having in vain been tried upon everyone; but nobody did it fit. At last the assembled girls began to murmur, and complain that the king was only making fools of them, and they said:

"Let us cast lots, and whoever wins shall have both the crown and the prince."

The Prince Sigismund took this very ill, and asked them to wait until the evening. To this the girls assented. Shortly before sunset a watchman was posted near the high road to see if any more aspirants for the crown might come that way. The prince called out:

"Time wanes, Guard; do you see anyone coming along?"

The watchman answered: "I see the flowers already nodding their heads in sleep, for night is fast approaching, but I can descry no one on the high road."

Again the prince said: "Eventide has come, Guard; do you see no one on the high road?"

The watchman answered: "A cloud is passing before the setting sun, and the birds in the wood are hiding their sleepy heads under their weary wings. Night stands on the threshold, but no one is to be seen on the high road."

The prince asked yet once more: "Evening

has waned, Guard; do you see no one coming along the high road?"

The watchman again answered: "I see a small cloud of dust rising near the margin of the big forest. It is fast approaching. Now I see a poor shepherd-girl driving her goats in front of her along the high road."

"Let us try the crown on the shepherd-girl," said the prince.

But the girls, who all considered themselves far superior, cried "No, no." But the king had the shepherd-girl brought forward, and lo! when they tried the crown on her head, it fitted exactly!

By this time the sun had quite set, and darkness fell upon the land, so that no one could see what the shepherd-girl was like. But Prince Sigismund thought in his heart, "Heaven itself wishes me to take the poor girl for my wife, and I gladly obey, for I have seen her before in the hut of the poor old woman in the forest, and I know that she brings sunshine with her wherever she goes."

And the populace shouted "Long live

Prince Sigismund and the Princess Adalmina!" But many people thought to themselves, "It is after all only a poor shepherd-girl." Then she was brought, with the crown on her head, into the royal hall, brilliantly illuminated with a thousand wax candles. But brighter far than all this sea of light beamed forth the wondrous beauty of Adalmina, when she suddenly appeared before the throng in robes of golden tissue, for with the pearl also returned all the other endowments of the red fairy. But best of all, she was also allowed to retain the gift of the blue fairy—a pure and humble heart; and since her good memory also returned, she remembered perfectly that pride had formerly dwelt in her heart, and how she had become transformed; and she knew now, how that the poor and ugly are far happier with a good conscience than the rich and beautiful in all their haughty pride. She humbly knelt before her parents, imploring them and all others to forgive her her former sinful pride, and as a proof of how much her heart was changed for the better, she led forward the poor old

woman that had come from her forest hut, and embraced her, saying:

"The charitable are rich in their poverty, but the stony heart of the wealthy is impoverished even in the midst of his treasures."

And all present who witnessed this could scarcely believe their senses. But Prince Sigismund said:

"I knew all along that this would happen. Adalmina's pearl is exceedingly rare and beautiful, but infinitely more precious is a humble and contrite heart."

The nuptials of the prince and princess were then celebrated with great pomp and joy in the castle of the king; and the four women-in-waiting, with the four valets, were liberated from the dungeon; and the scarlet-clad headsman with the big, frightful beard, placed his axe in a corner. And all the people in the realm shouted joyfully:

"Rare and beautiful is Adalmina's pearl, but far more precious is a humble heart."

# THE TWO BROOKS.

"NOW there is really something very queer about this brook," said Richard, "it seems to me as if he wanted to speak to me sometimes; whenever I make a dam with a few stones, to allow my ships to get into deep smooth water, he throws his spray up into my face, and gurgles and murmurs as if he would say, 'Listen to me!' but it is impossible to understand him when he speaks a language which nobody knows."

"Well, do you know," answered Rose, "that is exactly how it is with my brook; whenever I splash in the water, or wash my doll's clothes, I fancy I can see somebody looking at me, and nodding, as much as to say, 'I know something you don't know!'"

"It is only your own self you see in the water," said Richard, "just as in a mirror."

"As if I didn't know that," quickly responded Rose slightly annoyed; "but I tell you that the girl in the brook is a different creature, and we are more like two sisters; when I open my lips she opens her mouth, but though I speak she never says anything."

"She is, perhaps, the daughter of the spirit of the brook; you just take care, or she will do like her father, pull you by the feet and drag you in."

To this Rose didn't answer, for she was slightly offended again.

"Now don't get out of temper, Rose," said Richard; "our brooks are so close to each other that they very likely come from the same source. They must be brother and sister; but see, my brook is broader and deeper than yours, and sometimes he is quite turbulent in temper, so I will call him the 'Madcap' brook."

"My brook is smaller and flows more gently, he murmurs words of love at quiet eventide,

so I will call him the 'Gentle' stream," Rose answered.

"Yes," said Richard approvingly, "and the madcap brook is my brother, while the gentle one is your sister; we shall like them all the more since we have given them names."

"It is for all the world like as if the two brooks were two little children," said Rose; "I wonder what becomes of them when they run away from here?"

"They go out in the wide world, of course," said Richard. "Come, now, let each of us follow each other's brook in his course to see how they fare, and when we have come to where they end we will turn back home again."

"Yes, so we will; but only stay a little, while I run home to fetch some bread and butter," said provident little Rose.

"Very well, make haste, and bring me some as well," said Richard.

After a short time Rose returned with sandwiches, and they each set out on their different journeys.

"Good-bye, good bye!" said Rose.

"Ta-ta," answered her brother gaily, he following the course of the Madcap brook, while she took that of the Gentle stream.

And now my story naturally divides itself into two different parts, so we will concern ourselves with the little girl first.

Rose walked along the bank of her stream, saying, "You darling little child of a brook, you are only just learning to creep now, I wonder what will become of you when you grow big? Flow gently and peacefully, and show me your fate when you have got abroad in the world."

Rose continued her wandering, the brook meandering quietly at her side, watering the flowers on the bank, nourishing himself with the moisture from the meadows, and soon he grew gradually stronger and bigger. As he expanded, the water became more transparent and his course more subdued, and he fell into a gentle murmur of meditation, while his banks became more verdant and fertile. At last he was welcomed and embraced by a deep sylvan lake that was longing for this union. Birch and mountain-ash, the latter in full

bloom, had formed a living ring round the shores, and the sun from the sky reflected his heaven-born splendour in the calm waters of the lake, while swans floated peacefully upon its bosom, and the lingering rays of the setting sun tinged their lovely down with rosy colours.

Little Rose unconsciously folded her hands together, and softly whispered to the brook, "How happy you are, beloved stream; during your whole course of existence you have been the means of spreading many untold blessings to herbs and trees, and fertilising your banks, and when your life has come to an end God allows you to sink into the embrace of the lake, radiant and sparkling with heavenly joy. God grant that I also may live and die like my darling brook."

Rose now turned back, grateful and joyous, and ere nightfall had arrived home, but Richard had not returned yet. "He will come soon," thought the little girl.

But Richard came not, either during the night or the following day; he was not heard of for many years. "My poor brother,"

thought Rose, "and he had only a sandwich for his journey!"

At last everybody was sure Richard was lost for ever, and the sorrow was general and sincere; only the madcap brook and the gentle stream blustered and murmured respectively, quite plainly in the summer evenings, "Only wait, only wait, he will come back," but nobody believed them.

Time passed on and Rose grew up, and forgot to wash any more of her doll's clothes in the Gentle stream, and also to nod to the little girl in it who had formerly been her dear playmate, and last of all she almost forgot to grieve any more about Richard; new thoughts were constantly born which dispelled the memories of the past. But the two brooks murmured incessantly, "Only wait, only wait, he will come back."

One day arrived a traveller, a stranger with a long black beard, and asked of a young lady in the garden if she knew anything of a child called Rose, and the girl accosted was no other than Rose herself, but she did not answer, for she was so surprised, and could

not understand what business the stranger had there.

He then appeared to be very grieved and addéd, "Nobody remembers me in this place, and Rose, my darling sister, is away; I will go to our two brooks, the Madcap and the Gentle stream, and ask them for my little sister."

By this Rose perceived at once that the stranger was her long lost brother, and she very nearly flung herself into his arms to cry, "Don't grieve, Richard; here I am, your own sister, and we will never more part"; but she subdued her emotions, and instead added, "Come, let us go to the two brooks."

They went on to the narrow slip of land which lay between the two rivulets, and which was covered with the greenest of grass.

"I recognise my madcap brook," said the traveller. "Though a stranger, would you like to hear the story of this, my own brook?"

"Yes, do tell it," answered Rose with quickly beating heart.

Richard began: "I was only a wee lad when I left my sister and my home to follow

this brook and see what became of him when he grew big. The 'Madcap' brook, as we called him, leapt boisterously on from his very commencement like a frolicsome boy, and could bear no obstacles in his way. When he encountered a stone he grew quite white with rage, and hurled it aside as he proceeded on his way. When he came to a firm projecting cliff he fought for a while a fierce battle for supremacy, but had sense enough to yield and take his onward course. The further the Madcap went, the more increased his strength; rills and rivulets became his vassal tributaries, and he soon grew into a broad stream. I followed his course faithfully; when I became hungry, people that dwelt in cottages on his bank gave me food; of water to slake my thirst he himself gave me an abundant supply; and when I was tired I slept upon the soft grass on his banks; but the stream still increased in power and showed his real madcap nature. He yielded to no more cliffs, but with accumulated power sprang over them and descended as a swift rapid, after which he would take a rest before

beginning new strifes. The mills built upon his banks he worked briskly, turning the wheels which ground corn for many hamlets. Saw-mills were constructed to take advantage of his power, and he cut planks and beams, working diligently night and day. He carried big rafts of timber on his broad shoulders, and floated them safely down his foaming rapids. He increased every way, and by this time he had grown into a mighty river; yes, one of the greatest in the world. I followed his course for months and years, and saw rivers and streams, themselves great, become his tributaries, and now the Madcap brook had acquired giant strength; I saw him carry whole fleets of proud vessels on his broad back, and course through mighty cities, whose very existence he had called into life; and the inhabitants said, 'Have you ever seen such a mighty river before?' 'No,' I answered, 'but I knew him when he was a wee thing, a child like myself, and I have stanked him often at his sylvan source with a few small stones, and the very first vessel he ever floated was a little boat I made of a pea-pod.'

The greater became the stream the more useful was he, but also the more dangerous; they constructed large mounds to guard against his indomitable spirit, which at times would leap over all boundaries. One spring day, when the sun had melted the snow upon the mountains, countless new-born streams and rills rushed down the slopes, to swell his size; this infused new life into the Madcap stream and made him feel as of yore; he grew wild, over-bearing, and threw himself with a fierce clamour over the mounds that bound him in, and flooded a fertile and thickly-populated district. But now a mountain stood in his way to oppose his course, he paused for a short time to gather all his forces into a large lake with which he besieged the mountain, but the giant fortress stood firm. However, he increased the lake until he reached the mountain ridge, when mad with victory he threw himself headlong down the steep cliff on the other side; this formed one of the grandest and most beautiful cataracts, and with tumultuous uproar he revelled in his own valour, sending the spray on high, so

that it glittered in all the colours of the rainbow, like a halo of glory, and then again he made for his great goal, the ocean, in the distance. But he had yet a long way to travel ere he could reach his destination, and at last he grew tired of his own greatness and divided himself into several arms, which shallow and sluggishly made their way through a marshy land. Now the Madcap stream had grown old, and having led an adventurous life, he grew feeble in his old age. Men mastered him once more, and led his main course into new channels, and dammed him up whenever they chose; and when the time had come that he must merge into the ocean main, then the former Madcap stream stole through many little unknown rillets into the unfathomable mystic deep before him, when he ceased to exist as a stream, but became an unit of the pristine element.

"But I repeated to myself, 'I thank Thee, O God, that Thou hast allowed me to see, in the course of this stream, the picture of man's life in its grandeur, its usefulness, its arro-

gance, and its ultimate feebleness; and now know I that neither power nor greatness are eternal, but that the great ocean, Death, awaits us all alike; therefore let us try and seek our greatness, our power, and our ultimate goal in Thee alone, everlasting God, and let us learn to subdue our proud passions, and become useful toilers for Thy kingdom of heaven upon earth.'

"And here," added Richard, "ends my story about the Madcap brook; I have returned a wiser man, but as I cannot find my sister I feel very lonely, spite of all my rich treasures of memory."

"No, not alone any longer," answered Rose, "for now your own sister twines her arms around your neck, and her lips kiss yours, and her joyous tears mingle with yours. Let us build a cottage here on the meadow, between the Madcap brook and the Gentle stream, so that we may always see them, and constantly remember their different fates. Tell me, Richard dear, if you agree to that."

"Yes, I do," he answered, and lovingly kissed her brow and hands; and they then

made their home between the two brooks, and always remembered that God has a deep-fraught meaning in every image He shows his children in the multitudinous variety of creation.

Rose and Richard in time grew old, but the two brooks remained young, the one the same placid mirror out of which peeped a little head to every child that looked into it, and the other, ever eager to float the tiny pea-shell boats which little boys consigned to his care; the Gentle stream murmured lovingly at eventide as of yore; and the Madcap brook danced away as frolicsome as ever, over stones and pebbles. Neither of them knew or cared what would be their future lot, but Rose and Richard knew it well, for it had taught them a wholesome lesson which they remembered as long as they lived.

# THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WOOD.

ELL, it was a sweet, beautiful morning, I can tell you, and early too, I really don't think it was more than 5 o'clock; the sun had barely risen, and the shadows of the birches fell long and attenuated over the green sward. Father and mother did not like us to sleep long of a morning, and there lived near us an old fisherman, who was in the habit of calling out under our bed-room window every morning as the clock struck 4: "Reef topsails and haul in your sheets, boys," which sailors shout to each other when a storm arises in the night. Like a shot we darted out of bed as this greeting reached us; before we got accustomed to it we thought it very hard, but soon we saw the

truth of the old saying, "The morning light hath golden mouth," but then you know a little fellow must get into his hammock by 9 o'clock of an evening.

I have often thought we ought not to sleep away those glorious summer nights in Finland, almost radiant with brightness and only slightly obscured with a thin veil of twilight, the dew glittering on the grass, and the birds singing the whole livelong night; but the mandates of nature must be obeyed, so sleep one must.

Frederick the Great, of Prussia, was a monarch highly appreciating the value of time, and it vexed him that he was compelled to sleep away one-third or one-fourth of his life. He, therefore, once resolved upon accustoming himself to do away altogether with such a wasteful habit. The first night he worked all the time, and that so far succeeded very well; the next night he also wrote the whole time, without so much as nodding once, and now he fancied he had achieved a great thing. But what was the consequence, think you? The following day, when he was seated in his

Council Chamber, surrounded by his ministers, and they began to speak to him on important matters of State, they suddenly noticed that His Majesty began to nod and nod, and that he fell asleep where he sat nodding, in all the dignity of royalty.

I am, therefore, most loyally of opinion that we must do as nature bids. Sleep is a blessing to the weary and the suffering, and to the troubled mind a great relief; but that is no reason why one should encourage oneself to be lazy on a glorious morning like this; no, far better to imagine that the old fisherman stands outside the window bawling, "Haul in the sheets and reef topsails, boys."

But I must tell you how the forest appeared on the morning in question. There was a delightful fresh verdure and a cool genial air, upon which floated occasional breaths of lime-bloom and the balm of fir-trees. There were numerous trees of various kinds, from the towering pine, meditating upon the time when he would become a tall mast and sail round the world, down to the little juniper bush, who consoled himself with the thought

that he could become a tree if somebody would take the trouble to lopp his branches and tie him to a pole. "But I don't care for that, I prefer my liberty," he said, "and if I grew tall, then the little children would not be able to reach my branches, when the time comes to chop off some of my twigs to strew on the floor of the kitchen on a Sunday morning."

"And that is the only thing you are good for," observed a tall fir, who actually thought himself of a higher rank in creation; "such things as you, are only made to be trampled upon," he sneered.

"Well, what then?" answered the juniper. "I am quite content that I can gladden the hearts of men with my fragrance, fresh from the forest, besides which, I am useful for many other things as well; for instance, I chase away the gnats with my smoke, when anyone lights a few of my twigs, and I am first-rate to make bows of, which any schoolboy knows, and they can also brew small beer with my berries, and also use them for medicine, and they can ——."

"Stop short there, Friend," interposed the mountain-ash, "for it is very conceited to enumerate one's own merits that way. I should really like to know which of us all might justly be considered to be the most beautiful and useful in the wood. What do you say to that?" And the mountain-ash waved gracefully his white airy branches, for he happened to be covered all over with blossoms, it being mid-summer time.

"What a question!" called out a lime-tree, also redolent with blossoms. "Let us carefully consider who might gain the palm," he said, and artfully perfumed the air with his luscious sweet breath to gain their favour.

The lady birch also approved of the proposed contest, for she had had her long flowing ringlets curled by the morning breeze, and now waved them conquettishly to all her admirers. "I rather fancy that I am the most charming," thought the lady of the wood to herself.

A willow, who stood close by the lake, and was always mirroring himself in the water, thought that he surely was the most luxuriant,

graceful, and charming, and he, therefore, nodded to the others, saying, "Well, it is really a question to be deeply considered."

An aspen-tree stood close to them, and trembled for fear lest he should not gain the admiration of all; he was always trembling, the poor aspen, for though he was big and tall he had a faint heart and fragile branches.

A wild briar grew near also, but kept her secret hopes to herself within her thorny bosom; her pink blossoms smiled at the mere thought that anyone could fancy himself more lovely than they were.

"Let us refer to the flowers," said the beech, and spread his exuberant foliage patronisingly over tufts of violets and cranberry blossoms to protect them from the sun.

"There is no occasion for that," objected a giant pine haughtily, "to be supreme one must be big and strong. Look at me, am I not handsome? When I 'shiver my timbers' thousands of my prickles fall to the ground, which whole regiments of emmets gather and use as spears when they wage war against each other. That I am a warlike champion

I presume no one can deny," and the pine looked fierce, trying to frighten the others.

The oak listened calmly to the strife. "It is ridiculous to judge of ourselves," he said, "I am pretty sure that each of you thinks himself the best; let us, therefore, refer to the bull-finch, seated in the birch-tree top. He favours no one in particular, and he will impartially judge who is the most charming in the wood."

This proposal was agreed to, and they asked the opinion of the little songster, but he was reserved and rather shy of telling them the unvarnished truth.

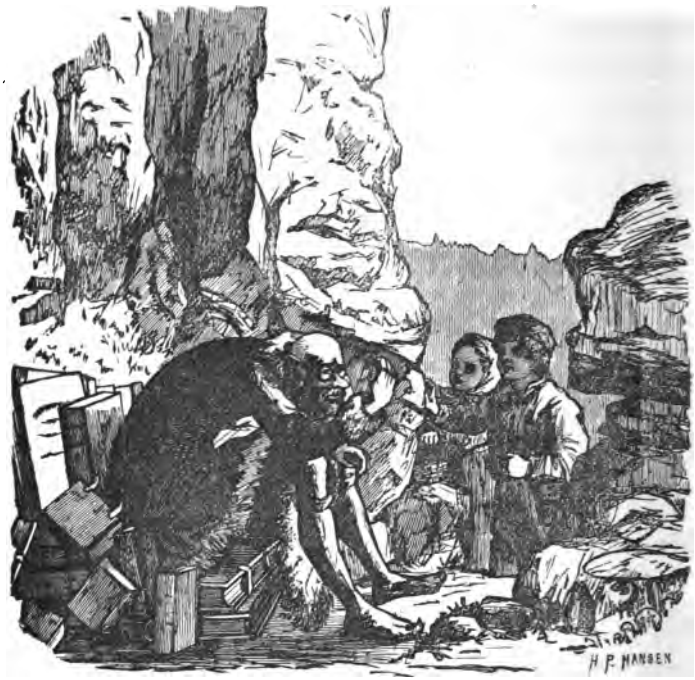
Then there came two little children, a boy and a girl, who lived in a little cottage close by, and when they came into the sylvan glade betimes, this glorious morning, they folded their hands in admiration, saying: "O kind God, how beautiful is Thy wood! how grand Thy whole world! Kind, loving, God, grant us poor children that we may grow up in Thy knowledge, and that our whole lives may be devoted to serve and praise Thee gratefully, O Lord!"

When the forest trees heard the children's prayer they felt astonished and reproved, and their murmurs died away into inaudible whispers, and the twitter of the bullfinch in the birch was distinctly heard:—

"Beautiful and glorious is our verdant wood, and all God's nature! but I tell you trees, who are vieing with each other as to which is the most beautiful, that of all the pretty and delightful things that God has allowed to grow in this forest, there is nothing more lovely, more innocently pretty, than these two little children, who praise God from the fulness of their hearts, this glorious summer morning. For beauty and wisdom and power and grandeur are naught where there is not a meek and humble heart that gives God the praise for everything. The trees hold forth their arms in adoration, the flowers offer up their incense, and the birds sing many a joyous 'Te Deum.' The same eternal spirit moves and speaks within us all; we all grow in the sunshine of heavenly grace; but the children's prayer is ever more acceptable to God than the songs of the birds,

the adoration of the trees, or the fragrance of the flowers. God bless you, little children, and protect you, tender little plants, in the great forest of life, and may you ever increase in knowledge and grace!"

# NATURE'S SECRET.




A LITTLE boy whom I once knew was called David, and he had a little sister named Hester. Their father was a settler in the deep forests of Finland, where he had made

a clearing, and tilled some land, and called himself Wood, because of his sylvan home. His wife was a kind body, who tended their two cows, two calves, the two goats, two pigs, and the two children, besides a horse, a dog, and a cat, and—well, really that is all I know about *her*. There were many weird old legends told about the forest in which they lived, but this did not frighten the family; on the contrary, they thought it quite in the order of things, and properly belonging to an old forest.

The children assisted their parents during the whole winter—indeed, there was no spare time for growing lazy. The boy was kept busy all the day with axe and other tools, helping his father to make implements for their husbandry, besides which he had to chop wood, carry in the fuel, and give the horse water. Little Hester also had her duties, she had to sweep the dust away, clean the pots, comb the wool, and feed the cows and pigs. Spring-time had arrived, and the cattle were for the first time to be let out to graze in the woodlands, and now everything would be

delightful for everybody concerned. The cow who carried the bell was called "The Star," and she kicked up her heels and scampered off in her clumsy way, so that a merry peal rang out from her bell. The calves, with tails erect, danced about for very joy, and the goats skipped with agile legs from stone to stone, shaking their beards in evident enjoyment, and David and Hester laughed so merrily and long that at last they were compelled to support themselves against the gate.

"Here is an oatmeal cake, a bit of cheese, and four dried herrings," said the mother; "now be off with the cattle and behave yourselves, and bring them home at nightfall; the goats will be sure to follow the cow-bell." The children needed not to be told this twice, and they hurriedly snatched up the provision wallet, and were off like two little sprites, capering and dancing with the two calves, while the mother remained for a short time listening, with a smile, to their merry ringing laughter, until it died away in the distance.

The snow had melted away from field and

meadow, but still lay in fleecy flocks in shaded places of the hills sloping northwards; birds were singing and chirruping in almost every tree; the green grass and the early violets were peeping forth from amongst the withered leaves of all shades and colours which lay strewn over the ground of the birch coppice. David and Hester felt supremely happy, they thought that everything smiled around them for very joy of existence. The trees nodded to them, the birds greeted them with song, the fresh green grass invited them to sit down, and the boulder-stones, that were abundantly scattered about, seemed to stare at them with grey eyes from under mossy eyebrows. The wind whispered in confidence to them, the clouds followed their progress from on high, the brook asked them to listen to his recital, the gnats and flies danced in the sunlight to please them, and the gay squirrels leaped from branch to branch among the tall trees to show them what clever trapezists they were. There seemed a particular bright sunshine especially spread on their road, and through the azure sky

glowed the orb of day in all its splendour, as if God himself had looked down upon them and meant to say, "How dearly I love you, little children!"

In the wood was a large mountain, with many clefts and caves, and in one of these fissures a hermit had built himself a small hut, partly supporting its walls against the mountain, and in which he lived. This hermit was a remarkable man, who for more than half a century had there lived a life of seclusion from the world, devoted to thought and study; he was quite a sage, this venerable old greybeard, deeply read in learned lore, and some hinted even in the black art and witchcraft; he was for ever meditating why the world was created just this way and not the reverse. "Old Greybeard," as he was generally called, could hear the grass grow, and knew the nature of every herb, plant, and tree, he also knew the names of all animals, and of all races of man; but he thought he only just required to know a little more and he would then have mastered all knowledge; as yet he had not been able to count the stars, nor

compute the number of the ocean sands, nor had he measured how broad and deep and long eternity might be. Upon these mighty problems were the old man's meditations fixed when the children arrived at his study in the cleft.

"Good morning, Gaffer Greybeard," cried the children, for they were not a bit afraid of him, and they had many times before chatted to the old man.

"Good morning, children," answered he, without looking up from the withered leaf he held in his hand and which he was dissecting.

"Why are you looking so closely into that withered old leaf, Gaffer?" asked David, while he was busy making a pipe from a willow twig. He first cut the bark through all round, then he knocked upon it, until the young bark became loosened from the wood, and then he cut a hole and made a gash, after which the pipe was complete and ready for use.

"I am seeking to find out nature's secret, and am accustoming myself to count the veins in the leaf; then I shall be able to compute the sands of the sea, and calculate

the vastness of eternity. But these are things you don't understand, little children."

"Indeed," rejoined David; and really he did not understand anything more of it than that it was a strange occupation. "What do you mean by nature's secret?"

"I wish to discover why everything is created the way it is, and the use of it, and whether it has come of itself," answered the hermit. "You see, my little lad, in *that* consists the secret of nature."

But David did not comprehend this. He took a bit of bread and cheese from his wallet, and seating himself on a big stone, commenced eating: that was one of nature's secrets he did understand. Hester was seated a little further off, making a fine switch for vapour-bathing purposes, from sapling birch twigs, and "The Star" went clanking the bell amongst the herd grazing. This, again, was for them a secret of nature they had discovered.

After a short time David, who had been sitting and thinking for himself, said to the hermit: "Don't you know, Gaffer, that God

has created everything, and that what He has made is good?"

"Well, that may be," answered the hermit; "but I will tell you, lad, that I have sought God ever since I began to reason, and so has many a learned man before me, but we have never found Him. I have tried to discover Him in the withered leaves, in the dead maggots, and in the mystic arts. I have analysed the flowers of the field, but I found Him not. I have pounded stones and ores to atoms, and sought him in the crystals, but I found Him neither there. I have dissected the lark to find out what made her sing, but her instrument was silent to me. Once I found a man lying dead in the wood; I opened his heart and his brains, but all in vain—still no God. Look you, child; this is the only marvel I cannot comprehend. You smile. Can you, then, tell me where God dwells?"

"Yes," quickly responded the boy; "anybody might tell you that. God is everywhere."

"But I cannot see Him; I want to feel Him with my hands," said the hermit, and

looked so wretched and unhappy. At this moment a dark cloud hid the sun, which made David feel sad and dejected, almost as if God had withdrawn His presence from the world, and left it a cold, dark, and desolate waste.

But this gloom lasted but for a short time; the cloud passed on, the sun glowed anew as if with increased power, the birds sang, the gnats danced, the cow-bell tinkled, the squirrels sprang gaily about among the branches of the trees, the birches looked quite gladsome, swaying their soft yielding foliage in the sunshine, and Hester, seated on a mossy stone, sang a song of which the echo took up the burden:

"Come listen to a noble song,
Which I have heard the thrushes 'mong;
God's bounteous kindness I will praise
Throughout the length of all my days.

"The flashing brook doth sing His love,
The shifting clouds speak from above,
The gorgeous blossoms of the flower—
All own, and wide proclaim His power.

" The stars shine forth at His command,
The sun reveals His mighty hand;
The whole wide world He fills with light,
And all unite to prove His might,
And show that God dwells everywhere,
Even within myself."

" Yes, that is just what I meant to say," cried David, quite elated, for the little girl had, unawares, happened to sing what he thought but could not find words to express. And then he began making a large horn of the bark of trees, such as graziers use to sound when they wish to call their scattered herd together.

" Well, now, this is astounding. I never thought of that before," said the hermit, and fell into deep thought. " If that is the truth —that one can actually see God in everything, without dissecting it, and that He is really to be found within ourselves too."

" There is no doubt of it," said David, and the sun shone straight in his face, so that he was obliged to shade his eyes with his hands.

" I must have discovered nature's secret,

then, at last," muttered Old Greybeard with consternation and surprise.

"That you may depend upon, Gaffer," quickly rejoined David, though he did not understand one whit of the old man's troubles, and then he began trying his new horn, to hear if it echoed from the hills.

"Well, now, truly, this is extraordinary," said the hermit, who seemed quite lost with astonishment. "Here have I in my time spent half a century in reading nature, and have found nothing but withered leaves and foul corruption; and then comes along a stripling like this, who is barely more than a babe, and brings me face to face with that which I have sought after so long. Is it possible that a little child can behold God, and solve the enigma of creation? when I myself, who have spent a lifetime in trying to unravel deep mysteries, and am thought to be one of the most learned men in the world, have taken so much labour in vain. But it is really the truth for all that, and it annoys me. Ah, after all, this little rascal is wiser than any of my school."

At these words Old Greybeard grew very small from sheer vexation, and seemed quite ashamed to look the children in the face; and then he retired into the dark recesses of the mountain cleft.

Hester had, by this time, finished making the switches, and David had been sounding his new horn, after which they began to search for the cattle and goats.

Never before had the wood appeared to them so delightful. Everything that had life sang and bloomed in the bright sunshine; every animal could speak, every tree look about itself, and the very stones appeared grey with wisdom. It seemed to them that God had written two great, beautiful, and holy Bibles, for man to read. In the one He had caused His revealed word to be written, His holy commandments, and the sacred evangels which speak of Christ and eternal life. In the other great holy and glorious Bible, the book of creation, which everywhere lies open for us to read, He has written on every leaf and living thing His omnipotence, His wisdom, and His eternal

love, if only we can decipher His scroll. But in this the old sage failed, and therefore he lived in the darkness of earth.

And it must not be wondered at that he felt vexed to think how he had wasted half a century (as well as others before him from time immemorial) to discover nature's secret, and how a mere babe, as it were, hits upon the right solution, and with no more concern than if he had found a berry in the wood.

But this is a striking fact in the world, that little children easiest find God, and though they cannot comprehend the deep mysteries of nature's secret, yet they feel within themselves that it is nothing less than that God himself dwells everywhere, and in everything, and in everyone.

# THE PINE AND FIR TREES.

N the wilderness of a Finland forest, near each other, grew two gigantic trees, a pine and a fir. They were so very old that no one could guess the time when they had been saplings, and they could be seen far and wide, for their dark tops towered high over all other trees of the forest. When spring-time came the bullfinch sang delightful melodies, perched on their branches, and the pink and pale blossoms of the heather looked meekly and admiringly up at the grand old giants, as if to say, "Great heavens! is it possible that anything can grow so tall, and become so great and so old in this world?" But when the wintry storms came, and enveloped the

whole tract in snow, and the heather had fallen asleep under the white sheet, the raging winds shook the snow from their ever verdant branches, and swelling to a hurricane swept, like an invisible flood, the houses from the surface of the earth, and laid low myriads of trees in the forest, like soldiers fallen in battle.

But the two mighty trees laughed at the storm-god, as he hurled obstruction from his path in his fury; there they stood, invincible and strong, nor ever once quaked, as everything else broke down around them; they might well feel proud, these champions of the wilderness!

Not far from them may be seen a small hill, on the top of which stands a humble hut, covered with turf and small stones to keep the sods in their places. The little dwelling has only two tiny windows and a low door. A potato-plot and a small patch of tillage-ground adjoined the hut, in which lived a poor man and his wife. During winter the poor cutter earned his living by felling trees in the forest, and transporting them to a large

saw-mill some miles distant, and was thereby enabled to make just enough to keep them in bread and butter, milk and potatoes; and that he thought was very fine, as many others had to live only upon bread, half the ingredients of which were made up of the bark of trees ground to flour, and had no butter at all to make it go down a little easier.

The poor people had two little children, a boy and a girl, whom they had named Sylvester and Sylvia; these were rather strange names, but yet appropriate on account of their sylvan home.

One wintry day, it was New Year's Eve, the two children went into the woods to look at the snares and gins, for hares and snipe were plentiful, and they had good luck, for there was a beautiful white hare caught in Sylvester's gin, and a pretty little snipe in Sylvia's snare, but both the hare and the bird were alive and struggling to be free, for each had been caught by the leg, and they cried so piteously that the children's little hearts were quite touched. "Let me go, and I will give you something nice," said the hare; "Let

me free and I will reward you," twittered the poor little bird.

They took pity upon the captives and let them loose; the hare scampered off quick as thought into the brushwood, and the little bird darted off swift as lightning upon her wings, and both cried out as they were leaving, "Ask Sky-high and Moss-beard, ask Sky-high and Moss-beard!"

"Did you ever!" said the boy, vexed; "such ungrateful little brutes, they did not even say 'thank you'!"

"They told us instead to ask Sky-high and Moss-beard; who may they be, having such queer names?" said the girl.

"I never heard of them before," rejoined Sylvester.

At this moment a keen north-easterly wind stole through the foliage of the tall trees quite near, creating strange sounds, and the children listened eagerly and could plainly hear the trees whispering to each other:

"Do you stand firm yet, brother Sky-high?" said the fir.

"To be sure I do," rejoined the pine, "but

how fares it with you, brother Moss-beard?"

"I am getting old, I feel it," replied the fir, "for the storm tore a limb from my body."

"Oh! you are only a child compared with me," said Sky-high the pine; "only 350 years, and I have completed my 388th year, quite a child yet you are."

"Now the storm returns," said Moss-beard, "we had better sing a little, to give my branches something to do."

And they began singing together, accompanied by the storm:

"List to our words!
High in the north,
Far back in time, and deep in the earth
Are we rooted,
Securely footed;
Therefore, we can weather all storms:
Old winter's shrouds,
Soft summer's rain,
Swift fleeting clouds,
All fall in vain
Upon our brows
Centuries old.

The sons of men
They come and go,
But we remain.
Little children,
Spring-time saplings,
Grow like we
Strong and great,
Firmly rooted
In mountain ground.
Grow in the storm,
Far up in air,
Grow in the light
Heavenwards!
Lift high your brows as we our tops,
Seeking to grow nearer to God."

"Let us talk to these children," quoth Sky-high.

"I wonder what they are going to say to us?" said the boy.

"Let us go home," whispered his sister; "I feel afraid of the tall trees, and their strange singing."

"Stay a little, here is Father coming, with an axe on his shoulder," and in a short time the cotter came up to them.

"Ah! here are just two such trees as I am

in want of!" and he raised his axe to fell Sky-high.

The children began crying. "Father dear, don't cut down Sky-high," said Sylvester. "Dear kind Father, pray don't cut down Moss-beard," begged Sylvia; "they are so very old, and have treated us to a song."

"What fool's tales are you telling now, children?" said the cotter; "old trees can't sing. But it is all the same. Since you beg for their lives I'll spare them, and try and find two others to suit me."

And he went further into the woods, but the children remained, for they were curious to hear what Sky-high and Moss-beard would say to them now.

The wind (which had been away busily engaged in turning the wings of the mill, so swiftly that the mill-stones had nearly struck fire in the dust and floss flying about), ere long returned, and began moaning in the trees; then the children could again plainly discern what their forest friends said.

"You have saved our lives, and we will reward you," they said; "you may now, each

of you, ask for something in return, and whatever your wishes may be, we will see them fulfilled."

This made the children very happy, but at the same time also very perplexed what to choose. They had no particular desire for anything coveted in this world; at length, Sylvester said, "I should like to have more sunshine, that we may better see the foot-prints of the hares upon the snow."

"Yes," exclaimed Sylvia, "and I should like for spring-time to come, so that the snow might melt away, for then the birds would again sing in the wood."

"What little fools you are," said the trees, "you might have wished for all beautiful things in the world, and instead you have only wished for things that will occur whether you wish them or not. But you have saved our lives, and therefore we will fulfil your wishes in the best possible manner. Upon you, Sylvester, we bestow the gift, that wherever you go and wherever you look a laughing sunshine shall spread about; and upon you, Sylvia, we bestow the gift, that

wherever you go and whenever you open your pretty little mouth, spring-time will bud, and the snow will melt. Do you like that?" asked the trees.

"Oh yes! yes!" cried the children, highly delighted, "It is much more than we asked for. Many, many thanks, dear old trees, for your kind gifts."

"Now good-bye," said the trees, "and we wish you much joy."

"Good-bye, good-bye," the children called out, and wended their way homeward. As they proceeded along the forest path, the boy often looked round to spy for snipes, as he was wont to do; and, lo! how strange! wherever he looked, it seemed as though a sunbeam illumined the way; it shone clear and bright, and gilded the branches and foliage of the trees. Sylvia saw with amazement that the snow melted away on each side of their forest-path. "Look! look!" she cried out to her little brother, and she had barely opened her mouth before green grass was growing at her feet, and the trees began to display their swelling buds, and the first skylark of the

year trilled his joyous strains high up in the air.

"Well, this is nice," the children cried with delight, and they ran home to their mother, the one exclaiming, "I can see sunshine everywhere," and the other, "I can melt snow."

"Well, anybody might do that," said the mother, laughing; but soon she got her eyes opened, for although the shades of evening fell all around the hut, within all was sunshine, which only faded away when Sylvester grew sleepy and gradually closed his eyes; and although it was early in the winter, such a balmy air of spring-time was felt in the cottage that the broom which was standing in a corner of the room began shooting tiny leaves, and the cock which was shut up in a small pen crowed with ecstasy to awaken his hens, and tell them of the unexpected season; and all this continued until Sylvia had fallen asleep.

When the father came home the mother said: "I am afraid, good man, that the children have met with something uncanny

in the wood, for everything seems bewitched around them."

"You only fancy that, Wife," said the cotter. "But what think you? I have great news! guess what it is. Well, then, the King and Queen are journeying through the land, and are expected to halt at our parish church to-morrow! What say you? shall we go and take the children with us, and have a look at royalty?"

"That I think we ought to do. I should like it above all things," answered the wife, "for I have never seen a king and queen before."

Early the following morning the cotter and his family set out for the church, and they were all in such great expectations about what they were going to see, that no one thought of the strange things that had occurred the preceding evening.

When they arrived at the church they found a great concourse of people assembled there, but everybody looked downcast and dismayed. The King, they said, had expressed great dissatisfaction at finding the

country so wild and uncultivated, and, being a rather hard master, he laid the blame on the people, and they expected he would punish them severely. Of the Queen they knew that she felt the cold in the land very much, and had been dejected and annoyed during the whole of their journey.

This rumour had been made known beforehand, so everybody trembled, and felt anxious when they saw the royal sledges coming at a great speed along the road. As they came near, the people saw that the King looked stern, and the Queen was weeping; but yet they stopped near the church, while fresh horses were being harnessed to the sledges, and the royal travellers looked around.

"How beautifully the sun shines out, all of a sudden," said the King, and smiled graciously, just like any other human being. "I can't make it out, but I feel quite in a good humour."

"That is because your Majesty has partaken of a good breakfast," rejoined the Queen. "I, also, feel quite happy."

"The reason is, your Majesty passed such a good night," answered the King. "But look around! How beautiful appears this desolate land; how the sun gilds those two tall trees, a pine and a fir. What if we should have a royal villa built here?"

"Yes, by all means let it be done, my liege," added the Queen. "For see, it is surprisingly mild here, although it is still winter-time."

At this moment they observed Sylvester and Sylvia, who had climbed up on a rustic wooden paling that ran along the road, the better to observe the royal party; and little Sylvia was chattering away in high glee, and at such a rate that the uncouth branches, of which the enclosure was made, suddenly shot forth green leaves.

"Look, your Majesty, there are two darling little children," exclaimed the Queen; "let them be brought to the sledge."

The children were immediately brought forward at the royal command, both sucking their thumbs, as seems to be the approved fashion among little folks when they are pre-

sented to someone of whom they are a little shy.

"My little ones," said the King, "I like you, and I feel quite happy and warm at heart when I see you. Get up into the sledge, and I will take you to my royal court, and dress you up in cloth of gold, and you shall have the opportunity of making everybody happy around you.'

"No, thank you, please Mr. King," answered both Sylvester and Sylvia. "We like better to make father and mother happy at home; at your court we should only fret after Sky-high and Moss-beard."

"Could you not bring them with you?" asked the Queen, who now felt quite warm at heart.

"No thank you, Mrs. Queen," said the children, laughing; "that we can't do, for they grow in the wood."

"What queer ideas get into children's heads, to be sure," said the King and Queen; and they both laughed so heartily that the royal sledge fairly shook from the effect. And the King commanded that a royal villa should

be erected on this very spot; every poor person received a golden ducat from the King, and Sylvester and Sylvia besides had a present of a huge festive royal-cake, which the purveyor had purposely baked for the journey, and which was so big that it had to be drawn by four horses. And the children in their turn gave freely of this to everybody in the hamlet; and yet there was so much left that the cotter's horse had a tough job to draw the rest home.

During the journey home to the cottage, the wife said to the husband, "Do you know why the King and Queen were so merry?"

"No," answered he.

"Why, it was because our children looked at them. Don't you remember what I told you yesterday?"

"Yes," said the husband; "but don't tell the children of it. It is better that they don't know of their marvellous gifts which nobody can explain."

But the boy and his little sister were so happy at the remnants of the big cake that they quite forgot all about their gifts of

spreading sunshine and melting snow; they were not aware themselves how happy and cheerful everybody became that went near them, and since they were good and loving little children, everybody naturally concluded that was the cause. Certain it is they made their parents very happy, and the wild country around the hut gradually became transformed into fertile corn-fields and rich pasture; where the birds of early spring-time twittered the whole year round; and Sylvester after a few years was made gamekeeper over the demesne belonging to the royal villa; and Sylvia was appointed to tend the flowers in the garden, and, strange to say, wherever these children moved, everything seemed to thrive, that it made one's heart laugh with delight to behold it.

One day Sylvester and Sylvia paid a visit to their old friends, Sky-high and Moss-beard; a mighty snow-storm arose on the occasion, and the wind as of yore sighed and moaned heavily as it swept through the dark foliage of the giant trees, for they were again chanting one of their old lays :—

"List, oh! list,
We are growing old, we are growing grey,
Yet to defy thee, O storm, we dare and may;
During verdant spring,
During summer's heat,
During moon's harvest ring,
During winter's snow and sleet,
During misty night,
At dawn so bright.
List, oh! list,
To our song as of old,
We are grey but" ——

"bold," shouted the storm with a hoarse laugh, and crash!—there lay both the mighty champions in the snow. Sky-high had reached the age of 399 years, and Moss-beard 361 years. They had not themselves noticed how their own limbs, with which they were rooted in the earth, at last had withered and lost their hold, so that the mighty storms of winter could vanquish these champions of the forest, no longer invincible.

But the brother and sister patted in a friendly way the mossy stems of the slain old giants, and spoke to them words of loving gratitude, that the snow melted all around

them and the pale and pink blossoms of the heather burst out in all their beauty, and intertwined among the branches of the fallen heroes, which thus became buried in a grave of living flowers.

It is now a very long time since I heard anything more about Sylvester and Sylvia, and I suppose that long before this they have themselves grown old and grey, since it is now many, many years when last any king and queen journeyed through Finland. But whenever I see two good and merry little children who everybody loves, then I fancy that they must be Sylvester and Sylvia, and that they have obtained their sparkling merry little eyes by way of reward from some Sky-high and Moss-beard. Not long ago, I saw two such darling children, and it was really remarkable that wherever they looked there seemed to spread sunshine from the merry glances of their eyes; a sunshine which dispelled the clouds from men's furrowed brows and brightened up the faces of those who but a moment before had gazed listlessly around them. The children themselves were not

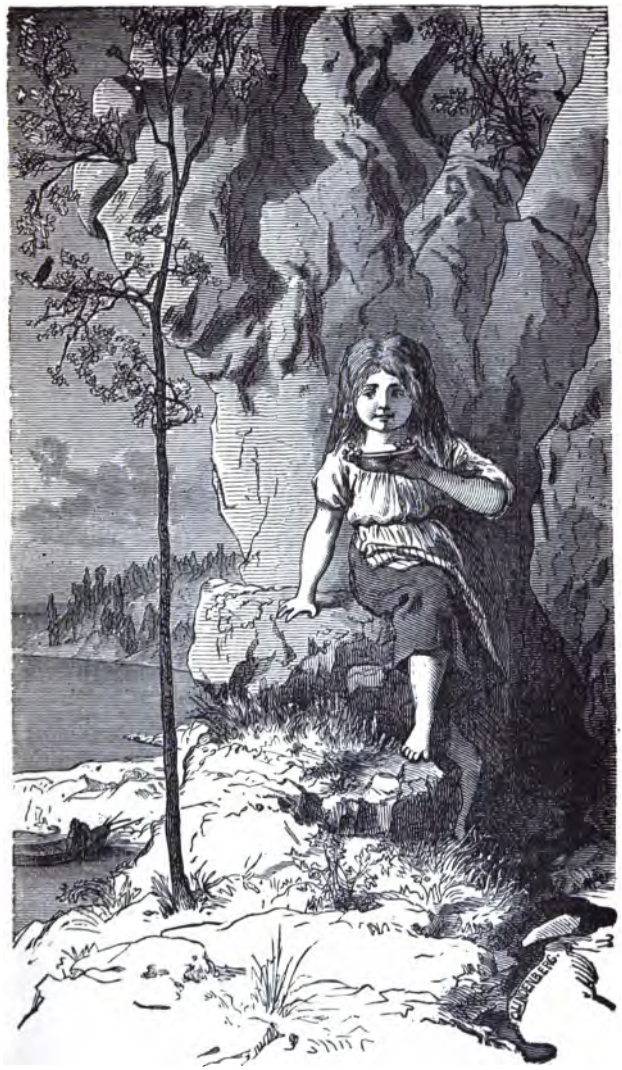
aware of their magical influence, but it was impossible to look at them without feeling a living joy beat responsive in your own breast, which we do feel when we see innocence and kindliness dwell in the same heart. Then thaws the frost which obscured the view on our window-panes; then melts the snow around us, and then men's ice-bound hearts throb with joy, and a new spring-time of life takes birth within, though in the winter of our lives; and, so to say, the very broom, as the meanest thing, begins to bud anew, and the dry branches of the rustic enclosure are once more covered with imaginary blossoms, and the winged and joyous harbinger of spring, the lark, trills his sweet melodies of love and light in the azure sky. And for all this we are beholden to some Sky-high and Moss-beard—or rather say to that God of eternal love who allows love and mirth to spring up like a new spring in the hearts of men.

# THE SILVER CHALICE.

WATER-LILY whispered to me the following story:

There once lived in a dilapidated hut, on a small island along the coast of Finland, a poor little orphan girl with her blind old grandfather. Heaven only knows how they managed to live through the long cold winter. The old man mended nets certainly, and earned a little money that way, and Lizzie, the little girl, made small switches and sold them in the neighbouring town, but that did not go far, and yet they never suffered want, for they humbly relied upon God, who is the Father of the poor as well as of the rich.

They possessed a small flat-bottomed boat, and four nets, with which they went out fishing during the summer months; and when



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the strawberries began to ripen on the hill-sides, the old man sat alone in the boat with his fishing-rod, while his grand-daughter went up the hills to gather the fruit. One day when the sun was scorching hot, they went out in the boat and rowed towards the furthermost isle on the coast, when the old man became thirsty, and said:

"Lizzie, my child, take the jar and fetch me a little water from some spring on the hill-side, for you know I can't drink the salt sea-water."

"Yes, Grandfather," she answered readily, and at once took the earthenware jar and leaped ashore.

It was a wild and uncultivated tract of mountain and dark forest-land. Little Lizzie ran along over hill and vale, until she was quite red in the face from exertion and the heat, but she found no spring, for it was such a hot summer that they had all dried up. At last she became very tired and went but slowly, and as she passed under the sombre fir-trees strange thoughts arose within her, the like of which she had never before

experienced. She fancied that the tall trees looked strangely at her, and she felt so lonely in the great wide world.

Then something rustled in the woods, and a shrill piping voice cried out: "Why are you so lonely, Lizzie dear; where is your sweetheart?"

She looked up startled, but saw nothing except a ptarmigan perched on the waving branches of an old birch. She felt frightened and began to run, but stumbled over an old tree-trunk that lay in her way, and, smash! there lay the earthen jar broken into many pieces.

"There! good-bye to you," she said ruefully. She was now in a fix. Grandfather was waiting all the time in the boat, and poor Lizzie had nothing to fetch water in to quench the old man's thirst.

She seated herself on the luckless tree-stump and began to cry, and then she heard another faintly-purring sound distinctly asking: "Why are you so lonely, Lizzie dear; where is your sweetheart?"

She looked around, but could see nothing

but a squirrel that peered at her slyly from among the branches of a luxuriant fir-tree. This vexed her. What business was it of the squirrel's if she chose to go alone in the woods? She turned her back upon him ungraciously and went away. But she had not proceeded far before she heard the same question repeated for the third time: "Why are you so lonely, Lizzie dear; where is your sweetheart?" This time it came from a beautiful and strange bird, with gold shimmering on his wings, soaring in the sky.

"What stupid talk is this?" she said. "Grandfather is still waiting in the boat for me to take him some water, and here I have broken our only jar."

"Maybe; but where is your sweetheart?" asked the golden bird from on high.

"Well, how stupid you are, to be sure!" rejoined Lizzie. "Don't you know that I love my grandfather better than anybody else in the whole world? How, then, can I have a sweetheart?" And the little girl thought these questions were quite irreverent and uncalled for, and she turned her steps towards

the sea-shore to find her grandfather again; but she did not escape her tormentors for all that, oh dear no. All the trees and the brushwood and stones around her seemed endowed with life, and began chattering, scattered old tree-stumps began to mutter, the blue-berry shrubs whispered at her feet, and the mossy grey mountains on which she trod, sighed softly: "Lizzie dear, Lizzie dear, where is your sweetheart?" This the girl thought was going a little too far, and no wonder; so she took to her heels and ran as fast as she could, crying out right and left: "Stupid old wood! crazy old mountains! who cares for you? Yah!"

At last she came to her grandfather in the boat. "Oh dear, oh dear!" she cried, "I have broken the jar, and have got nothing else to fetch water in, Gran'f'ther."

"Ah! that is always the way," muttered the old man, "when a child is sent on an errand. But, Lizzie, why have you been so long away?"

She told him where she had been, and what she had heard in the wood. "Never

mind that, child," said he; "'tis only tittle-tattle in the trees, when the branches rustle against each other, and it only means that we shall have rain to-morrow. A sweetheart, what nonsense that is!"

"Well, but I've got one, you know," said Lizzie.

"Yes, the kitten."

"Then I've two, Gran. Why, you are the other."

"You are a good little girl. Take the empty little butter-box, and try once more to find some water for me, for I am nearly parched with thirst."

She took the small vessel and resumed her search for water in the forest, which was now perfectly quiet; in fact, so quiet that it was almost too quiet. "If, at least, I could hear a linnet twitter," she thought to herself, but all the little birds kept silent. She saw a wild briar which had burst into bloom that day, and which spread an uncommonly strong and delightful scent for such a flower.

Lizzie culled some of the pretty little blossoms to give to her grandfather, but there

was something traced on the petals; and when she looked at it and began spelling to see what it meant, she found the same vexing question: "Why are you so lonely, Lizzie dear; where is your sweetheart?"

"Are you also worrying yourself about me?" she asked, and at once flung the flowers away. "Has the wood grown daft? I can't make it out. Has it got nothing else to think of?"

She continued her search for water, but found no spring; she found instead what she did not expect, viz. that on all the stones and bushes was scribbled the same tiresome question: "Why are you so lonely, Lizzie dear; where is your sweetheart?"

"Well, I am sure the wood is quite crazy; I must keep my eyes shut," thought Lizzie, and she pressed her eyes as hard together as she could, but was compelled to peep just a little at times, so as not to stumble on the stones and trunks of trees. At last she came to the shore, but without having found any water to fill Grandfather's butter-box with. She already bethought herself to return to the

boat a second time, when she descried a deep cleft in the mountain side, which sloped towards the shore, and in the chasm was still some fresh water, for it lay shaded from the sun. Lizzie was very glad at this discovery, and descended the steep cliff as carefully as possible to reach the water, but when she put out the little vessel to fill it she slipped, and was nearly falling down, at which she let go the butter-box to clutch the branch of a tree, and the little thing rolled adown the mountain into the sea; a gust of wind caught the little box and carried it far from the shore. "There it goes. Good-bye little butter-box!"

"Dear me," said Lizzie; "now it is as bad as ever again. What shall I do now to take Grandfather some water in?" And she seated herself on a stone and cried so bitterly that the tears rolled like tiny pearls down her cheeks.

After awhile she thought to herself: "Well, I do no good here crying, while poor old Gran is dying almost from thirst. I had better make a box of birch-bark and take some water in that."

No sooner said than done. She quickly made a little box of bark, which answered the purpose excellently, and she began again to descend the slope. She chanced to look down into the sea, and saw something glitter at the bottom, and she waded in the water and stretched out her hands to reach the bright object. It lay in shallow water, and presently she held in her hands a beautiful chalice of purest silver.

* * * * *

Neptune was seated in his emerald hall, and all his court waited upon him in silence; the king's brow was sad, for he missed his youngest daughter, Unda Marina, whom he had sent on a mission to gather corals on the coast of Australia. The pet, as was her custom, had dallied on a distant shore, to imprint her footsteps on the white sandy beach. The young prince of the forest, who was her betrothed, had thrown roses and narcissi to her among the cresting billows, and Unda Marina had gracefully caught them as they descended, and the time had rapidly passed away, and she had thrown, in mirth and play, the shell

in which she was to fetch the corals, to the prince, and he had kept it; then she remembered her father's command, and sank into the sea to fetch a new shell from the paternal repository.

An envious sea-monster, a tattling busybody, had hastened to inform the king that his daughter had spent her time with the forest prince, who was her sweetheart, and that she had given him the shell for a keepsake. This roused the wrath of mighty Neptune, for there existed implacable and eternal war between him and the king of the forest; but he calmed himself, and commanded his informer to fetch him the silver chalice. The monster obeyed and brought the precious cup, which possessed the strange virtue that every one who drank from it forgot that which was most dear to him in life.

Unda Marina quietly floated into the emerald palace in the shape of a silver-crested wave, and curtsied gracefully to her father.

"Where have you been all this time?" asked the king.

"Playing on the beach at catching flowers

with Prince Florian; but he has kept my shell, and I have come back to fetch another."

"Disobedient child!" answered the king, angrily; "I will forgive you this time, but see you do not the like again. Take this silver chalice instead of the shell, and fetch me some cool and sweet water from a spring in the north, for I am getting tired of always drinking salt-water." But he thought to himself, "My daughter will herself drink out of the silver chalice, and forget the forest prince for ever."

Unda Marina took the chalice and swam across the mirroring waters, until she found the spring in the cleft on the shore. She filled the chalice brimful of the cool water, and at once raised it to her own coral lips, for she felt thirsty in the summer heat. In an instant she forgot him who lay nearest her heart, the young Prince Florian of the forest; he had so engrossed her thoughts that she had forgotten about everything else in the world, and now floated thoughtlessly away in company with all the other senseless billows, which constantly chase each other across the blue main.

She had also forgotten the silver chalice in the shallow water near the shore; and there little Lizzie found it that day when she went in search of water for her grandfather.

She turned the cup round examining it on every side, and thought how beautiful it was, and how it glittered. "It will be a grand thing to take water in such a beautiful cup to Grandfather," she thought to herself, and immediately she filled the chalice with water from the cleft. How limpid the water appeared, like living silver. She could not resist the temptation, she drank, and——

In an instant she felt her blood curdle in her veins, and turn cold as ice; a strange dull numbness seized her every limb, and her heart grew almost still within her. Her childish and irregular thoughts, which but a moment since had flown in all directions in unbounded flight, came all at once to the ground with flagging wings, as if they had been brought down by grape-shot; and there she sat, poor little girl, like one in a dream, without remembering the tittle-tattle in the woods, or her

grandfather in the boat, who after all was what she most loved in the world.

How long she remained thus entranced nobody knows, but it must have been for a considerable time, for she grew in the meanwhile to a tall girl; the birds in the forest twittered as before, and the trees indulged in much tittle-tattle as interludes between their more sage whisperings, but Lizzie did not listen to either. Who cares for senseless foolish talk, or prudent either in this world, when one has nobody to love?

Then came many visitors to the spring, and drank out of Unda Marina's silver chalice; for of some use Lizzie liked to be, or else why should she be sitting there. Once there came an old widow after a fisherman; she had wept for twenty years the loss of the loved one, whom the sea had robbed her of; and she took a deep draught out of the charmed chalice, and grieved no more. Another time there came a vain girl, who thought of nothing but combing her long golden tresses, and when she had drunk from the chalice, she dropped her comb into the sea. And yet another time a

gentleman was seated with his fishing-rod in hand on the rock; he loved nothing in the world so well as himself, and when he had drunk, he suddenly remembered that while he was living and feasting upon the very best of the land every day, his poor old mother and his sister had to endure cold and hunger. How many people would require to drain Unda Marina's silver chalice to the very bottom, so that they should forget their own selves?

The most to be pitied was the poor, blind, old grandfather. Perhaps he is still seated in the boat, waiting for the water that is so long in coming, to slake his thirst. There are so many slips between the cup and his lips.

One day came a young sailor to the sea-shore where the spring was. He had come to cut some timber from which to make oars. He saw Lizzie sitting on the cleft, and he felt inclined to jest, so he said:

"Why do you sit so lonely, Lizzie dear; where is your sweetheart?"

She looked up and knew him at once, for they had often played together as children.

She gazed at him and he looked at her. Then the birds in the forest began to sing and twitter all around, and on every tree and branch, every shrub and leaf, every hill and stone, was once more scribbled that most incomprehensible question which before had so thoroughly vexed and puzzled little Lizzie when she had gone in search of the spring.

"I recollect Grandfather is waiting for me seated in the boat," she said, and at once sprang from the cliff, and ran away over stones and stumps at such a rate, that half of the water was spilled out of Unda Marina's chalice.

"What a fleet little thing!" said the sailor, and by mistake made a cut in a stone, so that he blunted the edge of his axe.

Lizzie ran as fast as she could, and found her grandfather seated in the boat, waiting patiently for her.

"Where can you have been all this time?" he asked.

She told him what had befallen her, and how she had found the silver cup, but she did not mention anything about the young sailor,

for she had quite forgotten that there ever existed any sailors at all, and the moment she forgot him she recollected her grandfather.

"Now you must drink at last, Gran," she said cheerfully and lovingly, and she held the cup to his lips.

The old man drank eagerly, and, like the others who had quaffed from the enchanted cup, he quite forgot what he most loved in the world, which was the use of his eyes. He thought that to be blind was quite natural, and he remembered not that he had ever beheld the sun, the moon and stars, the blue deep, and the verdant woods and meadows.

Meanwhile, Neptune sat in his kingly palace, waiting in vain for his daughter's return. He then despatched the sea-monster to find her, but he quickly returned with the intelligence that Unda Marina had forgotten everything, and now floated a listless billow over the ocean main.

The submarine monarch became infuriated, and flung the sea-monster, transformed to a slimy rock, into the Gulf of Finland, on which many a tall ship founders when a

heavy gale is raging in the dark autumnal nights.

But that did not bring his truant daughter back. She never returned, and the king's long beard has grown silvery white with grief for his lost darling.

Lizzie rowed her grandfather to their island home, and there they found everything just as they had left it, and the old man again mended nets, and the girl made switches and set the nets to catch the fish.

Unda Marina's silver chalice they sold to a silversmith, and who knows where now it is to be found? Perhaps somebody has bought it for a cream-jug, and maybe the gossips round the tea-table wonder how it is that so many of them that use it now, so soon forget what before they had loved most in the world.

It sometimes happens that the young sailor rows to the beach, close by where Lizzie's hut is, and he looks sorrowfully up at the little window. But she knows him not. She works at her switches, and listens to the trees that whisper outside her home:

"Why are you so lonely, Lizzie dear; where is your sweetheart?"

"I wish I knew!" she answers, and would fain laugh at the thought, but she cannot find it in her heart to do that either, for somehow there is something strange and melancholy in the sigh, which she cannot quite understand.

You little bird with golden shimmer on your wings, and who sings so sweetly up in the blue ether, repeat once more the words for dear little Lizzie, and sing them also to the billow of Unda Marina on the shoreless sea. Perhaps they may listen to you, and their memory may return to them. Sing to the giddy billow, "Unda Marina, Unda Marina, have you forgotten your friend in the forest?" Then again repeat your song to the poor girl in the hut: "Lizzie dear, Lizzie dear, why are you so lonely; where is your sweetheart?"

# THE WHITE VIOLET.

OWN in the valley grew a white violet; she was neither prettier nor plainer than other white violets, and, considering that all such little spring-flowers are pretty, of course this one was as beautiful and white as any of the others. "Was she not a little prettier than the others?" "Well, I am sure I don't know." Where flowers grow there butterflies always flirt about. Where else should they flirt? It is the same old story over and over again, and yet there is always something new in them!

The most splendid-looking of the butterflies was called "Apollo"; he had white wings with golden stars, by way of orders of distinction. Butterflies generally may be presumed to be a little vain, and love tinsel

and display; of course they cannot help being gaudy, they are born aristocratic flirts.

One day Apollo came on a visit to the white violet, and said: "Love me, and I will love you!"

"I cannot help but loving you," answered the little flower, for she was quite taken with his splendid appearance, and was too artless to make believe to the contrary.

"Well, but is it quite sure?" asked the butterfly.

"Of course," answered the dainty flower, "I cannot live without you!"

"That 's right," said the flirt, and sipped the honey from her chalice. Butterflies like honey, but they are rather improvident, and don't store it up as the bees do. He had his feast and then flew away.

"He is sure to return," thought the floweret; but she was mistaken, Apollo stayed away, he hadn't time to think of her.

One day, however, he was fluttering around near another little flower close by. "Now I have an opportunity of speaking to him," thought the little white violet. Then she

nerved her enfeebled petals a little, and called out, as loud as a little white violet possibly can: "Love me, and I will love you."

"I don't love you a litttle bit," answered the heartless flirt, quite unconcerned, for he did not care one whit.

"But I love you," remonstrated the discarded little love.

"Very likely, so much the worse for you," responded the aristocrat, and away he flew again. But now he stayed away yet longer. The little white violet was left quite lonely on the sward, the hours slowly dragged on, and she began to wither.

At last Apollo came again, quite by accident, looking even more splendid than before, and the artless little flower asked once more: "Don't you love me?"

"Not a bit," answered he.

"But I love you," repeated the rejected little thing.

"Well, what is that to me?" answered the cruel flirt. "That is the same old story which I have heard a hundred times before," and in a moment he was off again.

"Just listen to me, Miss Violet," said a knotty juniper-bush, which grew near at hand; "it is not proper to lay bare one's feelings in the way you do. We must appear a little saucy if a weak little flower like you can be taught to show off such pertness. If anybody cuts you, why, cut them again; and if anybody makes you feel that he despises you, you must show off who you are. Just look at me; only just let the sparrows dare to slight me! No, Miss Violet, we must have some self-respect. It is quite old-fashioned, I can tell you, to return love for contempt."

"But, really, I can't help it," said the despised little thing. "I love him with my whole fragrance, and will continue to do so until I wither and die."

"You are a spooney little mushroom!" answered the juniper-bush, and that was the very worst he could say, for these fungi were said not to be very choice in the selection of their acquaintance, and the spruce prided himself upon his great knowledge of the sylvan world.

The sun was scorching hot, and the white

violet grew paler, and every hour became more withered. Then some boy's came running into the wood, and one of them flaunted about a butterfly-net, and then he caught sight of Apollo. "Look, what a splendid butterfly!" he cried; "that will be a fine specimen to stick with a pin in my collection of insects." And he began chasing his gaudy prey over the sward.

Apollo was now in dire distress. How he flew! how he fluttered! Hey! the net touched him on the wing and down he tumbled, head over heels, defenceless, upon the green grass, close to where his discarded violet still lingered. "He fell down somewhere hereabout," called out the boy, and bent down to search for the captive, but when he did not find him, he ran away to chase other butterflies.

And it was no easy thing to find Apollo, for the white violet had hidden him under her leaves, which formed quite an arbour above him. But her slender stalk had been trampled upon, and she was quite torn off and lay crushed amongst the grass.

"It was well I escaped," said Apollo, and he crept out from his hiding-place, which was the nether garments of the little white violet herself.

"Do you love me now?" said the little withering floweret, cut off from her parent root.

"Oh, it is you!" said the incorrigible coxcomb. "Look, my stars and ribbons have been most horribly defiled! Really I shall not be able to show myself in society again."

"Have you no love for me at all?" asked the dying violet.

"Nay; but look how dirty my beautiful costume has become!" continued Apollo. "Have you a dew-drop in your chalice, my dear? if so, do give it to me, that I may wash myself, for I am as black as a mole."

"Then have you no love for me at all?" asked the flower for the last time.

"My dear friend, I have no time just now for such trivial questions," answered the dandy. "Ah! just what I feared, my frill is quite rumpled! What will they say at the Court of the Roses?"

"But I love you still," sighed the violet, and breathed her last scarcely perceptible fragrance, and all her withered petals fell off from her chalice, and there was the end of her.

"Oh, dear me! look at the poor thing now," said the butterfly, lamenting, for his heart was not altogether bad; he was only very flighty, and took things so easy, like the rest of them, that was all. "And the worst of it is, I shan't be able to get any water to titivate myself with now, before the night-dew falls. Really I am a most cruelly used butterfly; my dress-coat is quite destroyed, my frill rumpled dreadfully, and my stars and medals look like copper coin—how very annoying! It will create an awful sensation in the world, and everybody will pity me—that is some consolation—I shall be considered highly interesting: how they will talk about me at the Court of Roses!" And, with these words, the gay Apollo again took wing, but he had not gone very far when a sparrow, who had lain in wait for him in a tree, pounced down upon him. "Smack!" and the beautiful flutterer became

a mere mouthful for his ravenous foe, though he thought himself highly interesting to the last moment.

The prickly juniper-bush had witnessed all this, but he kept his thoughts to himself. The fault was (he tried to reason), that the little white violet was far too amiable. "No; it is far better to be a little more self-confident, and sting again if anybody is too impertinent. Why don't they take example of me?"

But everybody did not think alike. When the evening zephyr sighed in the long grass, it took up and carried away a gentle whisper amongst the remaining white violets, which meant, "Love me, and I will love you"; and then they added, "And when you do not love me any longer, I will still love you."

It certainly was an old and common-enough story, but the white violets loved to repeat it very often.


# THE AMBITIOUS BIRCH.

N the wood, not far from the high road, grew a beautiful birch-tree. He was only a sapling yet, and it being early spring-time, he had begun to throw out numerous tiny buds and leaflets, of a soft delicate green, the dainty costume in which Mother Nature attires these, her curled darlings, in their childhood.

"Now, really I am very pretty," thought the young birch-tree to himself. "I am sure I am a good deal handsomer than any of those crooked old mountain-ashes yonder. I should think so, indeed," and he tried to straighten himself out more than ever. "Now I wonder what I shall become in the world; perhaps the

titmouse could guess." With that he asked the little bird.

But his adviser was a little rascal, who wished to keep friends with the birch, to be allowed to peck with his beak at his fresh-swelling buds, so the titmouse answered, "Well, really now, master birch, you are certainly good-looking, and, I should say, destined to become something superior in this world. I would almost wager anything that they will make a basket of your twigs for the princess, to be placed on the marble slab of her table and filled with golden apples."

"Oh, indeed! how delightful!" exclaimed the conceited birch.

"That you may depend upon," said the little story-teller of a titmouse, and flew away to a big spruce-fir which grew a little way off, and made him believe that out of his trunk would be made a rocking-chair for no less a personage than the king himself. He knew not that the sly bird wished to shelter himself under his thick branches when it rained, that he might feed in peace and comfort upon his tasty spruce-cones.

How artfully they are taken in, who listen to the flatterer's voice!

Near to the main road was a hut, from which one day a number of children came into the wood, and being provided with knives, began to cut off twigs from the young birch. "Ah, here they have come already," thought the sapling, "to make a basket for the princess"; and he was so pleased with himself that he quite trembled with delight, and his little buds quivered in ecstasy.

"The leaves are not big enough yet to do for bathing switches," the children said, "rather let us make regular brooms of the long twigs."

"What," sighed the birch, dismayed, "dare anyone turn me into a broom?"

"What a fine broom it will make, to be sure," said the children, and then they made such a useful domestic implement of him, that is to say, not of the whole of him, but from his twigs, but that meant all the same, for every twig thought himself as good as the entire tree, and the ambitious little things consoled themselves with the thought that

they at least should have the honour of sweeping the princess' parlour, even if they were not permitted to become a casket for golden apples on a marble-slab.

When the children returned home, their mother, on beholding the new broom, said, "Well done, children, that is a good strong one, I will keep that for myself to sweep the kitchen floor with"; and she applied him to the task. The conceited twigs could have dropped all the buds from very fear and shame if they had not already been deprived of them during the making of the broom. After this trial he was thrust into a corner near the fireplace, and where at leisure he began chatting with the pail by his side.

"I belong to a fine family, though they have made a menial of me," he said, "but my lineage can easily be traced; isn't there something light, airy, and elegant about me still?"

"I can't see it," answered the pail, "but I myself belong to a very ancient race, who for ages have been the bulwark of the land. I was intended for a rocking-chair for the king,

and a most important position that is, I can tell you, but I was spoiled in the making, and was fashioned into a pail instead. A little titmouse had predicted that great destiny for me; he staked his life, he said, but then, you know, a little bird stakes his life too frequently."

"Oh, fie upon that little rascal," interrupted the broom, "he has cheated me in the very same way, and he has told you fibs. Tell me, neighbour, what do you intend to become by and by?"

"Oh, I shall remain a pail all my life," answered the spruce-fir's descendant. "If only I get my fill of bones, and peelings, and dishwater I am quite content. And then the pigs are really very fond of me; directly I go to fling them their victuals, they hear me coming, and crowd round quite eagerly to see me. I say, friend, as our lot in life has been thrown together, what do you say to our marrying?"

"Well, I'm sure, I never heard of such presumption!" exclaimed the broom. "Do you imagine that I intend to remain all my

life in this position? A broom, forsooth! Oh dear no! You will witness my rise in the world yet."

"Well, those who live shall see," answered the pail.

The housewife at this moment came to the fireplace, and looking at the broom, said, "I see it is already a good deal used up, I had better make a switch to chastise the children with; it is really needed at times, when they are disobedient"; and she at once set about making it, not of the whole of the broom, only from a few of the softest twigs, but of course each twig thought himself as good as the broom entire.

With the switch the mother beat her children, and since he was so frequently in use, he must have been sadly needed. Whenever they quarrelled, pulled each other by the hair, or tore their clothes, the switch had to perform his duties, and it was really wonderful how well he did his business; the children must have quite enjoyed it, for they marvellously improved.

The switch at first rather disliked his new

profession, but he gradually became so accustomed to it, that he was always ready for work, and whenever the children quarrelled he used to say to himself, where he sat stuck up between the door-post and the wall, "Now then, I shall soon be amongst you!"

"A mighty fine position you are raised to, and no mistake," sneered the pail.

"You be quiet, or I will treat you as I do the children," muttered the chastiser. "Nobody knows yet what may become of me if fortune comes in my way."

"Well, we shall see," answered the incredulous pail.

"Heaven be thanked, the children have now been taught to behave themselves," said the mother. "Dear me, the switch is quite worn up; I will just put it together with the remnants of the broom as a bed for the little pigs, they are in want of something soft to lie upon."

The stumps of sprigs were now thrown into the sty; not a very nice place. "Enough, enough," grunted the inhabitants, and turned them over with their miry snouts.

"Good gracious me, how you look!" exclaimed the pail, when she was brought with the pigs' food into the sty.

"Keep your pity to yourself," answered the twigs, "you don't know what may become of me yet." But really now he was in a most deplorable plight; if a switch could shed tears instead of drawing them from others, he had cause to weep enough to fill the whole pail.

Now you may think the story has come to an end, but it is nothing of the kind. The birch had not been allowed to supply a basket for the princess, and as a broom had not been appointed to sweep her royal floors, or as a switch called upon to beat the golden-stitched jackets of the princelings, not even been used as a bed for the royal sucking-pigs. Instead of his ambitious plans in the spring-time (when he was budding with youth and hope) having been realised, he had been subjected to many humiliating tasks. The titmouse one day perched on the railings of the pigstye. The twigs recognised him at once.

"Well met, Titmouse; how do you do?" they shouted.

But the little rascal was off like a shot. He did not care to renew an acquaintance with those who had so sadly come down in the world, that even some trampled upon them; besides, he felt no longer any interest in them whatsoever, now they could not treat him to any more dainty buds in exchange for his flattery.

After some time the abject remnants of twigs were thrown out on the land, and there they lay embedded in mud and snow, summer and winter. The corn grew up and hid their miseries. The pail, as well as the housewife and the titmouse, had long ago forgotten their very existence. However, during all these misfortunes they had managed to preserve just one tiny little mite of a bud, which carried a germinating seed within it.

From this small seed grew in the middle of the ditch a wee birchen plant, softly tinged with green. The king and queen were out travelling in the land this season, together with their young children.

One sultry summer day they passed near to the little homestead and the little corn-field,

which lay close to the high road, and as the landscape was charmingly inviting, they halted for awhile to enjoy the cool shade which the luxuriant foliage of a clump of trees afforded.

Their little daughter, the princess, expressed her joy at quitting the close carriage, and danced away with delight along the side of the green-covered dyke, to where the little birch-plant grew.

"Oh, look what a pretty little thing grows here!" she cried. "Oh, I should like to plant that in my garden."

"It is only a little sapling-birch," said the king. "What do you want with it? Oaks, and poplars, and chestnuts, or fruit-trees are far better worth planting, my child; of them you may have as many as you like."

"I have plenty of them already," answered the little princess, "but I have not a single birch; do let me take it home to the castle with me," said she, beseechingly.

"Allow her to do that, my dear Lord," said the indulgent queen. "There can be no harm in so doing."

"Most willingly, you foolish little child,"

answered the king; "only, don't take all the pretty trees you see with you, or there will be no room for ourselves in the carriage."

The young princess carefully loosened the small plant from its birth-place, placed it in a basket filled with moistened moss, and thus brought it to her castle home. Once there, she transplanted the birch with her own hands into a fine garden, and placed soft mould around its roots, and watered and tended the birch every day, as if it had been her foster-child. The birch thrived and grew tall, and gradually became a fine large tree, alone of its kind among a number of exotic luxuriant trees—the simple child of the woodlands, born and nurtured in the freedom of nature. And he grew really magnificent and grand, and was the acknowledged favourite of the princess. Of all places she preferred to sit under his graceful leafy canopy, and all thought that this was the foremost tree on the royal demesne.

The ambitious birch-tree of the forest was vain; consequently had to endure a fall. His longings were influenced by false ambition; he was therefore condemned to suffer humilia-

tion, disgrace, and death. But he had cherished an everlasting hope of a better future, which no humiliation could crush, and for this he was now rewarded in the glory of his off-spring planted in the king's garden. The yearnings of hope and faith are always sooner or later realised, though inscrutable are the ways that lead thereto, through trials severe and frequent.

The pail had also in her youth nourished ambitious dreams of future fame and fortune; but she was of coarser grain, and had grown habituated to her drudgery, and at last thought of nothing but her daily food. Every sapling in the forest of life indulges in hopeful day-dreams of future greatness. But some only become plodders and drudges like the pail, others nothing at all, while still others become the source of happiness to their kin.

This yearning never ceases in the budding spring-time, and the youthful period of our forest life is full of these ambitious dreams. Dream, young sapling, of your future, hope for greatness, but beware of false ambition. Ever retain a pure and humble heart, hope

humbly, purge yourself of pride, and then you will not have to be buried in the cold earth before the princess of the future chances to seek and transplant you into her garden, where you may find your right mission of giving shelter and joy to the weary wanderers of life.

# CASTLES IN THE AIR.

SOMETIMES at sunset in the springtime, the sky appears more than usually transparent: rosy and violet veils are spread before the sun to make his glow endurable. It happens then, that small golden clouds rise at the furthermost view of the horizon, and flit playfully about amongst each other. They constantly change colour, form, and places: they glimmer gloriously, but the tracings are so airy and ephemeral, that they seem to be

the embodiment of mutability, they do not at all resemble the other clouds, that night and day are busy weaving their mystic veils in the heavens.

Why are they so beautiful and changeable? Why do they only float in those far distant regions? I will tell you. They are not rain-clouds but abodes of light, the castles in which the angels dwell in the azure sky, the beauteous supernal spirits who exist in those radiant realms of the universe. How can you fancy they could endure palaces of brick and marble, with sombre walls and zinc roofs, which would hide from their view the sun and stars? Radiant, transparent, airy and ever-changing forms like themselves are these abodes. They construct them of rays and sparkling gems, with walls of silvery moonbeams, and roof them in with the golden sunset. There they enjoy their gladsome existence in the freedom of the air, far above the mists of the earth, and thither not even the song of the lark nor the tumult of the strife below can penetrate; there brightness, serenity, beauty, and tranquillity adore God's

presence. His love, His magnificence, His sanctity, and His greatness, are spread like an eternal broad daylight throughout the lustrous worlds.

Who of you dare to assert that the transparent air cannot support the fairy homes of the angels? Have you forgotten all the tales of your childhood? In the bowels of the earth dwell gnomes and dwarfs. In the fire triumphantly breathes the salamander. In the sea reigns Neptune, and the beautiful, bewitching sea-nymphs with their green flowing tresses of sea-weed. On the earth men, and all around them, in the woodlands and on the mountains, is heard the echo; and every hill and every vale, every spring and brook, every leaf and frond, abounds with myriads of living beings, some of which are seen, but far more are invisible. Yea, far away beyond the sun and moon, and far away where the stars glimmer from immeasurable distances, glorious beings are said to exist, very different from us, or anything we can conceive of, who gaze with strange and wondering vision upon our planet.

And do you imagine that the air alone is void because the birds do not nestle therein? The air which floods the earth like an unfathomable ocean, invisible to all, but felt and inhaled by every creature? Do you observe how the wind swells the sails of the vessels, and turns the wings of the mill, how it supports the fleet wings of the birds, and the flaunting kite with its long wavy tail? There is no such thing throughout the universe as void. Everywhere life and light; everywhere is spirit and beauty, and adoration. Every atom hath its inhabitants, every star hath beings; and you think that in the sky dwells nothing! Have you heard the story of Radigundis, the princess of the swans, floating in the air, a star amongst dark clouds, and scattering her white feathers over the meadows in the spring?

Are you acquainted with Cheristane, the elfin queen of eternal youth, and who is subject to no changes, though all the world around her withers and decays in old age?

Have you seen Oberon, the monarch of the air, who with his pipe makes everybody dance?

or Titania, his wife, whose beauty and jealousy form the subject for so many tales?

Have you heard the Finnish tale of the girl who sits upon the evening clouds, and weaves a golden shade with silver shuttle?

Would you like to see them and many more of the beauteous creatures of the fairy tales? If so, listen to what I tell you. Go down to the sea-shore one evening at sunset, press your right hand against the left side of your breast, and feel if your heart beats warmly and freely, eager for what is beautiful and pure in the world. Look then around you with the eye of a child, and you shall behold wonderful things in the rosy clouds of the sunset.

But if you glance at them with an indifferent eye and a cold heart, you will perceive nothing but fleeting clouds and the evening mist, foreboding rain on the morrow. All that is beautiful in the world must be beheld with innocent eyes, or it dissolves into vapour, perishes, and becomes naught. This is the canon law of beauty, once for all, I cannot help it.

Often when I was a wee lad I used to sit on

the craggy shore, and admire the dancing waves glittering in the sunset. Round and round they went in circles and long shimmering rows far out on the blue deep, and in the distance they could no longer be distinguished one from another, till they all at last reached the uttermost limit of the main where the sea ceased and heaven began. That was the place where at midsummer time the sun dived into the sparkling waves for a short time. It was the shore of Wonderland, enchanting and delightful, the loved spot where the phantoms of fancy and the airy inhabitants of the sunset clouds gambolled with each other in the faint, blushing billows. They darted in the shape of rosy flickering flames to and fro over the mirroring waters, they danced, they chased each other, they had a "set to," and tumbled about and fought playfully, and then kissed each other in earnest. A merry race they were. They gathered long veils of haze that lay over the woodlands, rolled them together, and tied them over each other's eyes, and had a game at blind man's buff. Then it sometimes happened that one of them darted

into the deep, and immediately a whole flock of the others followed in a shower of rosy sparkles; but the next moment the brilliant playmates rose anew, and with a gigantic leap were again seated astride on a golden cloud which slowly floated through the blue ether.

Some of the radiant beings were larger and stronger than others. They would pluck a starry gem from the heavens, and send it whizzing through the air. Many thousands of the little ones then stretched out their hands to catch the shooting star; but it followed the curve of the vaulted heavens, and fell into the sea like a display of fireworks, and burst into millions of sparkling atoms, besprinkling the waves like a spray of silver, a rain of diamonds, and this pleased the airy creatures beyond conception. They joined hands and danced all round the welkin, and the clouds hurriedly made way for them, and soon nothing was to be seen but the waving locks of their golden hair, which streamed behind, flashing like the northern lights, or electric waves and flames fanned by the evening wind. Such things we can see only when we

are children. When we grow up there comes a film over our eyes, so that we no longer can perceive the iridescent bloom on the wings of the butterfly, or the soft and roseate colour on the petals of the flower, or the playful gambols of the ariels in the sunset of a summer evening.

There lived a little boy, named Elias, at the homestead of his father, which lay halfway between the great gloomy forest in the east, and the glorious ocean main stretching westward. He was a quiet and meek lad, with a great love for pretty fairy-tales.

"I am sure I don't know what will become of the lad when he grows up," was frequently uttered by the father, who was a sturdy farmer, and could draw a straighter furrow than any man in the county. "The lad has far too soft a heart and the complexion of a girl, and that is not the stuff to make a bluff hearty farmer of. Aye, but his brother Eric is made of stronger stuff, with arms of iron and sturdy legs as if they were brazen mould; and Elias gazes into the air as if he would take a census of the gnats, while Eric carts the

manure into the fields, and don't care for anybody. Believe me, sir, Eric will become a rich man, while Elias will dwell in the clouds with sunbeams for breakfast and moonshine for supper."

"Well, but that depends upon what he will be taught," said the schoolmaster, who had read many books, and knew a thing or two. "'Tis all very well to have a strong arm, and the country may even yet need such; but clever heads are also needed, to guide the arms and comprehend superior things in the world. Send Elias to school, and we will soon find out what he is meant for."

"Well, I think I will take your advice," answered the father, and Elias forthwith became a private pupil of the schoolmaster.

One evening in the autumn, when twilight had set in, the legitimate time for telling fairy tales and adventures, all the children were seated around the fire, which threw out a ruddy glare on all things, eagerly listening to deaf old Kajsa, who knew more stories than anybody else, and could not be interrupted in her

narratives by troublesome questions. By her they were at once introduced into Wonderland, where princesses dwelt in enchanted castles surrounded by orange groves, where sang the gorgeous birds of paradise, and the children wondered if old Kajsa had really been there herself, since she seemed so thoroughly at home in describing its details. She recited to her wondering audience legends of silver palaces, where the good fairies live, where everything sparkles with precious gems, and of the mystic home of the water-sprite, who dwells at the bottom of the lake, and sits on a throne of mother-of-pearl; and she spoke of the hazy mountains in Ginnistan, where the golden pheasants build their nests, but which constantly recede before the wanderer's foot, even if he proceed in the same direction for twenty years.

"Oh, don't I wish I could only once see a castle of silver and rubies," said little Peter, the son of the village carpenter.

Elias lifted up his head at these wistful words, and his big soft eyes beamed with love, and he nodded with a friendly smile and said:

"That you also easily may do; I see that almost every day."

"You!" cried all the children. "You!" reiterated Eric, and laughed derisively; "well, what next! I don't think you will find many castles of silver about here, amongst the firs and junipers."

"Well, then, all of you come with me to-morrow evening a little before sunset," Elias remarked quietly.

"Agreed," all cried, and the following evening all the children accompanied Elias to a cliff on the sea-shore, where there was a fine view of the sea.

"It is not such a glorious sight now as at midsummer," Elias said. "The ariels grieve that the summer has fled; they don't dance now so merrily as before, but we need not wait long, they will soon appear." And the children gazed with wonder and great expectation over the main to the horizon which was being painted in purple and gold by way of prelude, and the performers were waiting to enter upon the scene.

The golden disc had barely touched the

margin of the sea before a flood of rosy light suffused the waves and illumed the clouds, and towering castles with silver turrets and colonnades of gold burst upon their vision, and airy phantoms were seen to emerge and join in festive dance amongst the floating clouds.

It was a glorious and enchanting sight. Elias clapped his hands in ecstasy, and called out: "Look! look! there they come!" And all the children looked to where he pointed; but some of them discerned nothing but clouds, others beheld the castles but not the phantoms; only one little ragged girl, like Elias, clapped her hands and cried quite beyond herself with joy, "I see them, I see them, there they come!"

"Who are come?" asked Eric, who was also one of the party. "I see nothing but a few ragged clouds moved by the wind. The clouds are only humid vapours, Father has told me, and I happen to know something more about those things than you."

"Well, do tell us what you know!" said the children.

"I know a proverb that says:

'Evening red and morning grey,
Are two sure signs of one fine day.'"

"No, that's not it," said one of the other boys, "this is it:

'Evening grey and morning red
Brings rain upon the shepherd's head.'"

"Why, you lout, that is the end of the same proverb!"

"No, it isn't," cried the other.

"Yes, it is, and I'll prove it to you," and with that Eric gave his adversary a box on the ear, and then the two boys began fighting furiously in the glowing sunset.

"Nay, but look how beautiful it is!" exclaimed Elias, and the little beggar-girl and several of the children repeated with delight, "Nay, but look how beautiful it is!" Just then broad streaks spread in the azure vault, the airy phantoms formed a circle around their golden castle, and moved in a graceful undulating dance, and some scattered themselves along the blue main of the sky, and with renewed impetus began travelling in fantastic gyrations, as if they had been swift

skaters, inscribing their hieroglyphic names on crystal ice.

"Just you wait a bit," cried the boy who had been beaten by Eric; "I'll go home and tell father."

"Oh, but why don't you look?" Elias cried out. "Now a tower rises high in the air on the principal castle in the sky, tipped with a silver spire, carrying aloft a golden cross, and red flames flicker all around."

"I don't care for any such foolery," said Eric, annoyed.

"Oh, but stay yet awhile," entreated little Peter, who, like Elias and the girl, had eyes for the gorgeous display of the heavens. "Oh, what beautiful clear colours! Look at the opposite shores, lit up with bright green and gold! Look how the mountain-ridges shimmer against the sky, and how the swans swim in the creek, and the lazy swell of the rose-coloured wave against the cliff yonder, dissolving into a spray of silver."

"And listen to the lullaby of the billows, and how the trees and sedges are humming the same tune," observed the beggar-girl.

"And look there," resumed Elias; "now presses a multitude of warrior phantoms, with flashing swords and glittering helmets, to storm the castle, and there comes the king with a crown on his head, leading by the hand a princess clad in dazzling white robes. Nay, but look how beautiful she is! And down there in that dark chasm waits a hideous dragon with fiery jaws, and all the flaming spirits, the king's champion-subjects, rush back from the sea; they now gather into dense masses near the battlements of the castle; they throw a shower of golden darts upon the enemy, and now the belligerent forces meet in battle array! Look how the bright helmets and coronets are cloven asunder by the flashing swords. A whirlwind comes from the sea in the east, and shakes the very foundations of the castle—it trembles! totters! ah, it falls into crumbling ruins! It is on fire! but through the ambient flames are still descried the glaives of the phantom warriors, the wide-flowing robes of the princess, woven from the first faint rays of the rising moon."

"Well, it is all moonshine with you," muttered Eric contemptuously. "Did ever anybody hear such stuff? Now I am off home to have my supper of stirabout."

"Yes, let us all go home and have our porridge!" cried most of the children in chorus.

Only Elias and the little beggar-girl, with litte Peter, remained on the strand until the last flush of the golden sunset had faded away, and the airy play of the celestial band had flitted into the starry regions of the night.

Since that evening twelve years have sped, bringing many changes in the lives of the children. Eric had become a sturdy, well-to-do farmer, who managed his father's lands with skill and foresight, turning the soil, draining the marshes, and clearing new spaces in the wilderness. Elias had for several years been travelling in foreign lands, and when he returned he had written many beautiful books on the prodigious wonders of nature.

One evening two young men stood on the cliff by the sea, and gazed with thoughtful

yet childlike eyes upon the gambols of the aerials in the sky. The immortal spirits never grow old, but the two friends had travelled with time. It was Elias, and his companion was little Peter, who had been most struck with the transparency of the colours in the landscape, and had observed the swans. The little fellow had now grown up and had become a painter. He was an artist famed for the glorious blending of colours in his works. Elias was a poet—one of the few who transcribe direct from nature.

They looked at the sunset, then glanced at each other and smiled; brotherly love lighting up their faces when they read each other's thoughts.

"Well, yes, everything is as it used to be," they said, "only our eyes are not so keen as when we were children; a filmy veil is already thrown over some of the aerial's display and the brightness of creation, but let us humbly thank God, who has endowed our eyes with capacity to penetrate the mystic veil and behold the glorious forms."

"Do you remember that evening," asked

Peter gaily, "when we stood here enchanted by the gorgeous display in the clouds at sunset, and Eric, in the midst of our joy and ecstasy, urged us to go home and eat stir-about?"

"Yes," answered Elias, "I remember it perfectly well; and the porridge has given Eric strong sinewy arms, while our love for the beautiful in nature has endowed us with the wings of poetry and art. But there was with us that evening a third, who saw and heard more than the others. It was a poor beggar-girl. She was the only one who heard the music quavering over the billows. It was the third gift which lay dormant amongst us children, the entrancing power of music, by the influence of which men's hearts melt like wax. Where is this our sister now? Sister in the chosen family of the few. What may have become of poverty's step-child?"

"Oh, she was destitute, besides like ourselves being untaught, and may not, like us, have been fortunate enough to get her great gift developed by proper training, to make her conscious of the heavenly spark within. Alas!

many great and glorious endowments are thus lost to the world."

While Elias was still speaking, they heard from the forest a clear resonant voice singing a ballad, pure and simple as if the verdant wood itself had composed it in a peaceful sylvan glade. From amongst the trees appeared a shepherd-girl driving her cattle home for the evening, and approaching the place where the two young friends were standing, and they recognised in her the little beggar-girl of bygone times. She also knew them again, and greeted them joyfully in her simple manner, and she sang to them beautiful ballads, quaint pretty ditties, such as are only to be learnt from converse with the flowers of the meadows and the whisperings in the wood. And the poet and the painter both listened attentively, while their hearts beat responsive to those simple lays, sung in the clear stillness of the evening.

"Ah!" said Elias with emotion; "God's beautiful gifts are never bestowed in vain. They have a mission of joy to spread amongst the poor and unlearned, as well as amongst

the rich and refined; and I thank Thee, great Heaven, that Thou dost allow what is beautiful upon earth constantly and eternally to make its way through trial and privation, contempt and neglect, and we know now that if many gifts are lost because they are not properly nurtured, new flowers of equally exquisite fragrance are constantly growing up in the fertile soil of nature. We also shall perish, but that eternal beauty, which we humbly strive to attain in our efforts, shall not die, but live evermore in new successions of glorious flowers. And thus we sing and paint with joyous hearts, for we sing and picture that which is eternal."

The disc of the sun again touched the margin of the sea, and the whole heavens flushed with joy; and then again appeared the beautifully shimmering castles in the air, with crystal colonnades and towers, and spires of glittering silver; and the spirits again floated through its portals, and dived into the sea, so that the silvery billows laughed with sparkling glee, and then again they formed a ring-dance around their mystic

azure world. Hills and vales basked in the glory, snowy swans swam towards the shore, and over the water floated a crystal tone, and the rays of the setting sun spread gloriously over the three chosen ones on the cliff—the poet, the painter, and the songstress from the verdant wood.

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